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The Golovlev Family

N.E. Shchedrin

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THE GOLLOVLEV FAMILY

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The Gollovlev Family.

CHAPTER I.

A FAMILY COUNCIL.

AFTER giving an account of his voyage to Moscow, where he had been to look into the rent owing by the serfs who lived there,* the steward was leaving the room, at a sign from his mistress, when a curious hesitation suddenly overtook him. He moved his feet restlessly, as if he were in doubt whether to say something.

Arina Pétrovna noticed the least movements of her household. She even possessed in the highest degree the art of guessing their most secret thoughts. So her steward's reticence made her at once uneasy.

"Well, what more have you to say?" she quickly asked.

"That's all," stammered Anton Vassilieff, who was trying all the time to get away.

"Now, don't tell lies! There's something else you want to tell me. I see it in your eyes."

But Anton Vassilieff could not make up his mind to speak out, and went on acting as before.

"Come, speak, you weathercock, and don't fidget about so," said Arina Pétrovna in an irritated tone.

* During the time of serfdom, the landlords used to authorise the serfs to go into some town to carry on any kind of industry, provided they paid a certain amount of money.

The lady of the house liked to give her people nicknames, and though she treated Anton Vassilieff as a weathercock, it was not because she suspected his fidelity, but his tongue was too long. In the middle of the property he managed was a busy market-town, containing numerous restaurants. And, upon my word, Anton loved to take tea at one of them, and to make a parade there of his mistress's power, though he often let slip an indiscreet word amid his braggadocio. Arina Pétrovna was always at law, and it frequently happened that her confidential agent's babbling revealed his mistress's ruses of war before she had put them in execution.

"Well, yes, there certainly is—" Anton Vassilieff at last mumbled.

"What?" inquired Arina Pétrovna quite uneasy.

She was an arbitrary woman, who was moreover gifted with a great power of imagination, and in a moment she saw passing before her eyes a crowd of pictures, each more disquieting than the others to her authority. Her face, too, grew pale, and she rose quickly from her seat.

"Stépane Vladimiritch has sold his house," continued the steward, stopping after each word.

"Well?"

"He has sold it."

"How's that? Why? Come along, speak!"

"Because of debts, they say. The reason for the sale is doubtless not well to mention."

"So it was the police who had it sold?—the court?"

"It would seem it's the police. The house was put up to auction and sold for eight thousand roubles."

Arina Pétrovna let herself fall heavily into her armchair and looked towards the window. She

seemed to have lost consciousness of herself for the moment. If anyone had come to tell her that Stépane Vladimiritch had just committed a murder, or that the peasants of Golovleff had revolted and refused to go to forced labour, or even that serfdom had been abolished, she would have been less thunderstruck. Her lips moved ; she stared fixedly without seeing. Her pre-occupation was such that she did not even pay attention to an incident that happened at the moment, and which would certainly have provoked inquiry at any other time. A little girl—the little Douniachka—was running full speed, hiding something under her apron ; she wanted to creep up to the window, but seeing the lady of the house, she turned round, then slowly retraced her steps.

Arina Pétrovna appeared to regain consciousness and exclaimed :

“ Ah ! yes ! That’s fine ! ”

Then she stopped, and the silence that heralds a storm reigned anew in the room for some minutes.

“ So you say the police sold the house for eight thousand roubles ? ” she asked again.

“ Yes, lady, that’s so.”

“ Selling the blessing of his parents.* How charming ! How noble ! You dirty hound ! Be off ! ”

Arina Pétrovna felt clearly she must take a prompt resolution, but, being still under the influence of the blow which had struck her, she was incapable of deciding anything, and her ideas, becoming inextricably confused, went off in all directions. To her way of thinking the sale of the house could not have taken place without notice, and there must surely have been an

* It is a tradition in certain classes of Russian society to designate under the phrase *paternal blessing* the holy images, and, in exceptional cases, the real or personal property which parents give their children on certain occasions.

execution and a valuation, prior to the auction. Yes, that house which had been sold for eight thousand roubles had two years ago cost her own self twelve thousand, not a kopeck less. Ah! if she had known it she would certainly have bought it back for eight thousand. And she said to herself : "The police sold it for eight thousand roubles ! Eight thousand roubles for his parents' blessing. Ah, yes ! What a coward ! A blackguard who lets his parents' blessing be sold for eight thousand roubles !"

"Eh ! and who told you ?" she at length asked Anton, after reflecting that the house was indeed sold, and that the hope of buying it back cheap was an illusion.

"Ivan Mikhaïlovitch, the innkeeper, who told me the whole story."

"And why didn't he inform me in time ?"

"He didn't dare to, apparently."

"Ah ! he didn't dare to, the idiot ! He didn't dare to. He'll pay for it. Let him be sent for at once from Moscow, and when he has arrived have him despatched to the recruiting office . . . Ah ! he didn't dare ! Well, he shall be a soldier !"

Serfdom, though nearing its end, still existed. It often happened to Anton Vassilieff to receive the most eccentric orders from his mistress, but the decision she had just come to about Ivan Mikhaïlovitch took him so much aback that it seemed by no means at all practicable. His nickname of "weathercock" at once returned to his mind. Ivan Mikhaïlovitch was a "serious" peasant; who could have imagined that such a misfortune would befall him ?

And besides, it was his "crony," his bosom friend—— "And there ! he's going to be made a soldier through his, Anton Vassilieff's fault, because he could not keep his mouth shut !"

“Forgive him, lady,” he said, venturing to take up the cudgels for his friend.

“Be off—you are his accomplice,” rejoined Arina Pétrovna in a tone which deprived him of all desire to undertake Ivan Mikhaïlovitch’s defence.

Before, however, pursuing my tale, I beg the reader to allow me to give him ample information about Arina Pétrovna Gollowlev and her position in the family.

* * * * *

Arina Pétrovna is a woman of about sixty, still very young for her age, and unaccustomed to encounter any opposition. Her bearing is severe; she rules without any control the vast estates of the Gollowlevs, and leads a very retired life. She pushes economy to the point of avarice. She has little to do with her neighbours, and requires from her children such a degree of obedience that, before taking any step, they put the question : “What will mamma say ?” In fact, her character is independent, inflexible, and rather obstinate, and nobody in the whole Gollowlev family dares to make the least objection. Her husband is a debauchee ; he is given to drink, and Arina Pétrovna declares of her own accord that she is neither widow nor wife. As for her children, some are serving at Petersburg ; the others, being faithful portraits of their father, are, as “wastrels,” kept away from family affairs. It is easily understood that under these conditions Arina Pétrovna freed herself early from family life, and yet the word “family” is ever on her lips, and all her acts seem dictated by care and interest for the family.

Arina Pétrovna’s husband, Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch Gollowlev, was known from his earliest youth for his incoherent and indolent character, and he

felt but little sympathy for his always serious and busy spouse. He led an idle and useless life, generally shut himself up in his study, imitated the cries of starlings and cocks, etc., and was especially industrious in composing "free poems." In his moments of expansion he would brag of having been the friend of Barkoff, who, according to him, blessed him on his death-bed. Arina Pétrovna felt an aversion from her husband's poetry from the first day ; she used to talk of it as "filth," as "silliness," and since Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch had only married, properly speaking, in order to have a listener, it may well be imagined that discord was not long in prevailing in the household. And the misunderstanding, which grew daily, at last inspired the woman with a complete indifference, mingled with contempt, for her rake of a husband ; and the man with a deep hatred of his wife, hatred mingled with a great deal of fear. Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch would talk of his wife as a "witch," as a "she-devil," whilst Arina Pétrovna would call her husband a "windmill," a "stringless guitar." And, strangely enough, though they had lived like that together more than forty years, it had never occurred to either of them that such a life was far from natural.

In course of time Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch's character, far from improving, went from bad to worse. Apart from his poetic recreations, he drank steadily and made no scruple about watching for the servant girls in the passages. Just at first Arina Pétrovna regarded her husband's "new occupation" with disgust, and even felt a touch of indignation in herself ; it is right to say that the outrage thereby done to her authority played a bigger part than real jealousy. Then she let him go his way, taking care at the same time that those "drabs" did not bring the master any brandy.

From that moment she told herself for the last time that she could not rely on her husband, and concentrated all her attention on one point : to round off the Gollolev estates ; and she actually enhanced their value ten times in forty years. Gifted with astonishing application and perspicacity, she would look out for the landed properties that were to be sold, get secret news about their being handed over to trustees, and unexpectedly turn up at auctions. In the course of this frenzied hunt for "honest acquisitions," Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch always remained in the background, and became at last utterly demoralised. At the moment the story begins he was already a feeble old man, who hardly ever left his bed, and if he happened by chance to leave his bedroom, it was only to poke his head through the half-open door of his wife's bedroom, to exclaim, "You she-devil," and to make off at once.

Arina Pétrovna was by nature too independent, too celibatary (if the word may be used), to see anything in her children but an extra expense for herself. She felt free only when she was in the middle of her administration-accounts, and when nobody came to interrupt her business talks with the stewards, the village bailiffs, and the housekeepers. The children were to her mind one of the "accessories" inherent in life, against which she did not think she had a right to protest ; they did not make any chord vibrate in her, absorbed as she was in the endless details of her household. The Gollolevs had four children : three sons and a daughter. Arina Pétrovna did not like to speak of her eldest son or of her daughter. To her youngest son she was quite indifferent. As for the second, Porphyrius, the feeling she had for him was rather fear than love.

Stépane Vladimiritch, the eldest son, was

known by the names of "Stepka the Booby," "Stepka the Insolent," and he was consigned early to the ranks of the "wastrels." From childhood he played the part of a pariah or clown in the house. He was, unfortunately, a clever young fellow, and easily took the impress of his surroundings. He owed to his father his inexhaustible blackguardism, to his mother the talent of divining at once the weak side of people. Thanks to the first quality, he became his father's favourite, which increased yet more his mother's ill-will towards him. It often happened that whilst Arina Pétrovna was absent on business the father and eldest son would enter the study adorned with Barkoff's portrait, and there, whilst composing "free poems," they gossiped and boasted, and Arina Pétrovna, the "witch" as they called her, came in for hot criticism. But she instinctively guessed their occupation. Her carriage would stop noiselessly before the perron, she would descend and approach on tiptoe to the study door and listen to the amusing conversation. Stepka the Booby at once received severe reproof, but he was not disheartened; blows and exhortations left him equally indifferent, and he began again an hour later; now he would cut the fichu of Annioutka, the chambermaid, put flies in the mouth of Vassiotka, who had gone to sleep, or he would get into the kitchen and steal a *pate*, which he certainly shared with his brothers, for Arina Pétrovna, out of economy, hardly gave her children anything to eat.

"You deserve to be killed, you rascal!" his mother used always to be telling him. "Yes, if I killed you, nobody would say anything, and the Tsar would not punish me for so trifling a thing."

Such continual humiliations, inflicted on so yielding a soul, were not without leaving traces.

His upbringing did not arouse either protest or irritation in Stépane, but it made his character that of a slave, with the suppleness of a victim of bullying, without sentiments and without foresight. People of that kind are without any strength of character and may turn into anything : drunkards, clowns, and even criminals. At twenty, Stépane Gollowlev finished his studies at a Moscow lycée, and entered the university. His life as a student was gloomy. To begin with, his mother gave him just enough money to prevent his dying of hunger ; next, he had not the least inclination for work, but in revenge he possessed a rare talent for imitation ; thirdly, he felt the need of always being in society and could not remain a moment by himself. That was why he had taken on the easy rôle of parasite, of sponger, and, thanks to his easy-goingness, he soon became the favourite of the rich students. The latter, whilst admitting him to their company, did not regard him as an equal, but simply as a clown, and such was soon his reputation. Once started on that path, he had let himself go more and more, until at the end of his third term he had become a buffoon to his finger-tips. Nevertheless, owing to his faculty of promptly grasping and retaining what he heard, he passed his examinations in a more than satisfactory way, and was received as a candidate. When he presented his mother with the diploma, she shrugged her shoulders, and muttered : "I am amazed by it." Then, after keeping him a month in the country, she sent him back to Petersburg, assigning him a hundred roubles a month for his keep. Then began a series of visits to various government offices, for Stépane Vladimiritch had no patrons, and did not at all experience the desire of carving a way for himself by work. The young lad had become so accustomed to idleness that his ideas no longer

cohered, and the editing of memoranda or reports, and even précis work, were beyond him. Gollovlev was compelled to admit at length, after fourteen years' struggle in the capital, that the hope of becoming something better than a mere government clerk was simply a snare. In reply to his complaints, Arina Pétrovna wrote him a letter which began with the words : "I thought so!" and ended by a command to return at once to Moscow. It was next decided to place Stepka the Booby in the Nadvornyi Soude,* entrusting him to the care of a pettifogging attorney, who had for a very long time been a business agent of the Gollovlev family.

What did Stépane Vladimiritch Gollovlev do at the Nadvornyi Soude, and how did he behave there ? A mystery ! What is certain is that he left it after three years. Arina Pétrovna thereupon adopted extreme measures : she decided to give her son "a bone to gnaw," which consisted in a house at Moscow, bought by Mme. Gollovlev for four thousand roubles. That was the "paternal blessing." And Stépane Gollovlev breathed freely for the first time in his life. His house had a revenue of a thousand silver roubles, and, compared with his previous position, that sum of money conjured up the mirage of a genuine prosperity before his eyes. So he kissed his "mamma's" hand effusively, although she said to him in that very instant : "Take care, booby, that's all you have to expect from me."

Stépane promised to justify the kindness of which he was the object. But, alas ! so little was he used to handling money, so curiously did he interpret the practices of real life, that that "fabulous" sum of one thousand roubles soon became insufficient for him. In five or six years he

* A tribunal which, during the period of serfdom, judged the civil or criminal affairs of citizens without estates.

was totally ruined. So he was delighted to be engaged as a substitute in the militia, which was then being organized. Further, this corps having been disbanded at Kharkoff, on the conclusion of peace, Gollovlev returned to Moscow, dressed in the militia uniform, with a hundred roubles in his pocket. He tried to speculate with his capital, or, in simpler words, he tried his luck at cards, but lost his little all in a short time. He then adopted the plan of paying visits to the rich peasants belonging to his mother, who lived at Moscow; with some he dined, got tobacco from others, and borrowed small sums of money. At last he found himself before a "blind wall." He was already verging on forty, and confessed to himself that it was no longer permitted him to continue his Bohemian life. There was only one road he could take, that to Golovlevo.

After Stépane Vladimiritch, the eldest son of the Gollovlev family, came Anna Vladimirovna, about whom Arina Pétrovna was equally disinclined to talk. The truth is that Arina Pétrovna had had certain views about Anna; now, not only had the latter not fulfilled her mother's hopes, but she had lowered herself to perpetrate a scandal, which had caused a sensation in the district. When her daughter left boarding-school, Arina Pétrovna had installed her at her country house, in hopes of making a secretary of her, a sort of unpaid book-keeper. But one fine day Anna eloped with Ensign Oulanoff, who married her.

"They marry one another like that, like dogs, without a parent's blessing," Arina Pétrovna had said aggrievedly on this occasion; "it's a lucky thing he even married her; another man would have taken advantage of her position—and there was indeed another!"

She also dealt as decisively with her daughter as

with her eldest son; she threw her too a portion of the heritage, and handed her over a capital of five thousand roubles in addition to a small village with thirty serfs, which possessed a decayed manor house, through whose windows the wind blew everywhere, and in which there was not one sound piece of flooring. The young people ran through the money in two years, and the ensign vanished for ever, deserting Anna Vladimirovna with two children, Anninka and Lubinka. The young mother died three months later, and Arina Pétrovna was then obliged to take in the little orphans. She did so, too, billeting them in a side-wing and giving them the bent old Palashka as attendant. "God's goodness is great," she remarked at the time.

"God does not indeed know how much bread the little orphans eat, but they shall be a comfort to me in my old age ! God has taken a daughter from me and given me two for her"; and at the same time she wrote to her son, Porphyrius Vladimiritch : "Even as your sister lived without conscience, so she has died, hanging her two children round my neck."

How cynical her remark must appear, when justice should have compelled her to admit that in the case of both the family episodes in which she had contemptuously assigned a portion of the heritage not only had there been no decrease in Arina Pétrovna's finances, but rather that there had been a definite tendency to increase, because the number of shares in the property had lessened ! Arina Pétrovna was a woman of strict principles who, after she had once parted with those portions of the heritage, held all her obligations to her children to be perfectly settled. In regard to her grandchildren, too, it did not enter into her head that she would be obliged to leave them something in due time. She was intent solely on drawing as much income as possible from the small bequest of

the deceased Anna Vladimirovna and to deposit it in the Court of Trustees. At the same time she observed : "There I am, collecting money for my orphans, so that they may have the means of living in the future. I will take nothing from them. May God pay me for the bread of mercy which I am giving them !"

As regards Arina's remaining children, Porphyrius and Paul Vladimiritch were in Petersburg. The former was in government service, the other in the army. Porphyrius was married, Paul an old bachelor.

Porphyrius had also a few nicknames in the family, which were invented for him by Stépane. From his earliest childhood he had tried to insinuate himself into his mother's good graces, had kissed her shoulder on the sly, and occasionally whispered something flattering. He noiselessly opened the door of his mother's room, crept softly into a corner, and sat there as if entranced, with his eyes fixed persistently on his mother, so long as she wrote or was busied with accounts. Arina Pétrovna, on her side, regarded these visits of her son with a certain suspicion. His persistency seemed mysterious to her, and she could not divine exactly what it meant : poison or childlike reverence ? "I can't determine what is actually in his eyes," she sometimes thought to herself ; "he looks precisely as if he wanted to throw a noose ; or as if he might be capable of giving poison or being treacherously cunning." And therewith occurred to her a number of ominous details during the time she was pregnant with Porphyrius. There was living then on the property a respectable old man called Porphyrius, who was given to prediction, and Arina generally went to him when she wanted to learn something of the future. Well, this old man, when she asked him if she was in the family way and God would bestow a son or a

daughter on her, did not immediately answer her question, but crowed three times like a cock before replying :

"Cockerel, cockerel ! It puts out a claw ! The cock crows, and threatens the hen ; the hen—cluck, cluck, cluck—that's how it will be ! "

And as a matter of fact, three days later (the soothsayer had crowed three times) she bore a son (whence his cry of "cockerel, cockerel ! ") and she named him Porphyrius in the soothsayer's honour.

The first half of the prophecy was fulfilled ; but what could be the significance of the enigmatic words : "The hen—cluck, cluck, cluck — that's what'll happen later " ? Arina Pétrovna often thought over it, when she took a casual glance at Porphyrius, who sat in his corner and kept his mysterious look fixed on her.

But Porphyrius remained quiet and motionless, and stared only at her, and gazed at her with such perseverance, with such widely opened, staring eyes, that at last they filled with tears. It was as if he knew the doubts that worried his mother's soul, and yet he behaved in such a way that even the most obstinate suspicion was bound to give way to his gentleness. He would continually turn his eyes towards her, as if to say : "Look at me, I keep nothing back from you ; I am all obedience and submissiveness, obedient not so much through fear as through loyalty and faith." And as she had not a very firm conviction that the crawling Porphyrius was only dissembling and casting snares with his eyes, her heart was unable to resist, and her hand involuntarily sought for the best piece in the dish for the flattering son, although, despite everything, his gaze awakened in her bosom an oppressive anxiety concerning something uncanny, something evil in the future.

The exact opposite of Porphyrius Vladimiritch, the bloodsucker, as Stépane called him, was his brother, Paul Vladimiritch. He was the most perfect pattern of a man who is incapable of getting on in any kind of way. Even as a boy he displayed not the least inclination either for study or games or popularity, but liked solitude and aloofness from human beings. He gets forgotten in some corner, goes to sleep and begins to dream fantastic dreams. He dreams he has eaten mouldy oats, and so his legs became quite thin and long, and he could not learn. Or he dreams he is not the son of a nobleman, but is the herdsman David, and a wart is growing on his forehead, just as with David, who cracks his herdsman's whip and is unable to learn anything. Then, suddenly, Arina Pétrovna looks in and sees him, and her motherly feelings well up.

"What are you doing here like a mouse in the graupen? He's gone to sleep!" she exclaims. "Is there already some poison working in you? I wish he could come to his mother and say: 'Maminka, be loving and kind with me, my heart!'"

Paul left his corner and slowly approached his mother.

"Maminka," he said in a low tone, unnatural for a child, "be good with me, heart!"

"Get away, you sneak! You pretend you're forgotten in your corner; but I understand you very well, darling! I can easily see through all your plans and projects!"

And Paul glided back with the same slow step, and again lost himself in his corner.

Time passed, and Paul Vladimiritch gradually became that apathetic and mysteriously dreamy personality which is the usual lot of a man who has had no spiritual guidance. He might be good, but he had not yet done anybody any good; he too,

perhaps, was not stupid, though he had not yet accomplished anything intelligent in his life; he was hospitable, but no one could yet boast of his hospitality. He liked losing money, but never yet had any good result come to anybody from his losses; he insulted no one, but this was not set down to his credit. He was honourable, but nobody had yet heard anyone saying: "How honourably Paul Vladimiritch dealt in this affair!"

In addition, he was not seldom at variance with his mother, although he feared her like fire. He was, as I have said, a gloomy, morose person, behind whose petulant ill-temper lurked a complete absence of education.

At a later age, the difference between the brothers' characters was most sharply defined in their relations with their mother. Porphyrius punctually sent every week a long letter to his mother, in which he elaborately informed her about all the details of Petersburg life, and assured her in the selectest phrases of his inextinguishable filial fidelity. Paul wrote rarely and briefly, and sometimes even so stiffly that you would think he was pulling every word out of himself with a pair of tongs.

"The money for the time fixed upon, precious, dear mamma, I have received from your faithful Jerofejev," wrote Porphyrius, for instance, to his mother, "and I send you my deep-felt thanks for the sending of it, which, dearest mamma, according to your wish, is destined to be spent in my household; at the same time I kiss your hands with childlike submission. I have but one care and fear: that you may not strain your dear health too much by your ceaseless anxiety to gratify our desires and needs! I don't know what my brother is doing—but I . . ." And so the letter proceeded.

Paul, on the other hand, wrote on a similar

occasion : "I have received the money, dear mother, and, after paying my bill, I have still six and a half roubles left, for which I beg earnestly to be forgiven."

If Arina Pétrovna wrote her sons warnings against extravagance, which was not seldom the case, although there was no serious reason for it, Porphyrius constrained himself to conciliatoriness and wrote : "I know, dearest little mother, that you are burdened with the heaviest anxieties about us, your foolish children ; I know that we do not very often recognise this motherly anxiety, and, what is worse, we often forget, in our human weakness ; for which I beg your forgiveness in the most straightforward, childlike way, in the hope that henceforth your wishes shall be fulfilled, and I shall be more prudent in my expenditure of the money sent by you for housekeeping and other items."

Paul answered : "Dear mother, you have not up till now paid any debts for me, and I therefore regard the name of spendthrift as very superfluous so far as I am concerned ; wherewith I beg to express to you my high respect."

To the letter announcing the death of their sister, Anna Vladimirovna, the brothers had sent quite different kinds of answers.

Porphyrius wrote : "The news of the death of our dear sister and playfellow, Anna Vladimirovna, has deeply saddened my heart, and it pains me still more that you, dearest maminka, should have to take a new cross upon yourself in respect of the two orphans. Does it not already suffice that you, the common benefactress of us all, deny yourself everything, and, without consideration for your health, concentrate all your powers solely on the object of assuring the family, not only of the necessities of life, but of other things too ? Justly does

one sometimes involuntarily sigh. In this state of affairs, dear mamma, the only fact I can recommend to your attention is, in my belief : Remember as often as you can that Christ, too, was pitiful."

Paul, on the other hand, replied : "The communication of the death of my sister, who has passed away like a sacrificial lamb, I have received, but I hope the Supreme will receive her in His eternal realms, although we certainly cannot be sure about it."

Arina Pétrovna read her sons' letters and tried to guess which of them might be dangerous to her. She prefers Porphyrius' writing, and yet it appears to her that he might be the more dangerous.

"How he understands writing, how he puts things," says she to herself ; "and yet not a syllable is true, all lies ; of his 'dearest mamma,' of all my burdens and my cross, he feels nothing in his heart." Thereupon she takes up Paul's letter, and now she fancies Paul will be her enemy.

Paul ! you poor fool ! See how your mother is muttering : "'And beg you to accept the expression of my childlike submissiveness'—I'll teach you what that means ! I shall throw you also a share of the heritage, as I did with Stépane, and you will then know at once how I understand your 'submissiveness'" ; and therewith broke the bitter lament from her motherly breast : "And for whom am I garnering it all together, for whom am I worrying myself, lying sleepless at nights and not even eating enough ? For whom ?"

Such are the domestic circumstances of the Gollovlevs at the time when the bailiff, Anton Vassilieff, informed Arina Pétrovna of Stépane's squandering of the "property flung to him."

Arina Pétrovna sat in her bedroom. She could not arrive at a clear thought, and something which she could not account for, inwardly stirred her. Whether any sympathy with her good-for-nothing son had anything to do with it—for after all he was her son, and that feeling could arise in her as if by a miracle—or whether it was the sentiment inspired by her offended mania for domineering—even a psychologist would not have been able to decide, her feelings and sensations were so confused.

Meanwhile, out of the whirl of her thoughts the fear became gradually clearer that the “good-for-nothing” would again be hanging round her neck.

“Anna has thrust her children on to me; now this ne’er-do-well is about to come too,” she said, sunk in thought.

Long she sat without speaking a word, and gazed through the window-panes. The meal was brought in, she hardly took any notice; they came and told her the master wanted brandy; without looking up she handed over the key. After the meal she went into the praying-room, and having ordered all the tapers to be lit, shut herself in, with the order that a bath should be prepared for her. These were all signs which indubitably proved that the mistress was “in one of her moods,” and suddenly the house grew as quiet as if it were deserted. The chambermaids crept about on their toes; the housekeeper, Akulina, ran to and fro like one distraught; after the bath, preserves were to have been prepared: it was time the fruit was ready, but the mistress neither gave an order for it to be done nor for putting it off. The gardener, Matvei, appeared, asking if it was not time to pluck the peaches, but the situation was cleared up for him in the maids’ room, and he very quickly took himself off again.

After Arina Pétrovna had prayed and taken her bath, she felt herself in a rather calmer temper, and had Anton Vassilieff called before her again.

“What precisely is my eldest son doing now?” she asked.

“Moscow is big—you can hardly walk through it in a year.”

“Of course, but still he needs food and drink.”

“He boards with the serfs. He eats with one, begs tobacco from another.”

“But who allows them to give anything?”

“Pardon, mistress; do you want to offend the people? They give strangers alms, and should they refuse it to their own master’s son?”

“I’ll teach them hospitality! I shall send Stépane to you on the estate; maintain him in everything at your expense!”

“As you command, lady.”

“What d’you say?”

“Just as you command, lady; give the order and we shall keep him.”

A brief silence fell. Anton Vassilieff had not been nicknamed “the weathercock” by his mistress for nothing; he began again to shift from one leg to the other, as if burning with the desire to give further news.

“People say,” he said at last, “that he brought back one hundred roubles in money from the campaign. It is not much, one hundred roubles, but still he might have been able to live on it for a time.”

“Well?”

“He thought he might start something with the money, and let himself in for an experience.”

“Now do come to the story at last, but don’t lie!”

“He went into some German company, and thought he had found a dove for card-playing,

instead of which he happened on a very cunning hawk; and what he possessed he lost. He went the other day to Ivan Mikhaïlovitch, and told the tale himself. And strangely enough, he laughed as heartily over it as if he had been very affectionately handled."

"It serves him right, and he shall not come within sight of me."

"But I think this will nevertheless happen."

"What nonsense you talk! I shall in no case allow him over my threshold."

"It is impossible that it will turn out otherwise," insisted Anton Vassilieff; "To Ivan Mikhaïlovitch too, he several times declared: 'I shall go to the old woman, in order to get my bread there.' And in very truth, lady, to speak the real truth, he has no place anywhere but here where he can lay his head. He can no longer find one with the serfs in Moscow. He also needs clothing, and careful looking after."

So that was what Arina Pétrovna feared, and it caused a certain obscure fancy also to arise within her by which she was harassed without knowing why. "Yes, he will turn up, because he can't go anywhere else; he will stand here before their eyes, the accursed, rejected, forgotten rogue! Why, indeed, had she thrown him a piece of the estate?" She had imagined that when possessed of that share of his he would be satisfied for ever—and now he had to come to her again! He will come, he will make requests, and his greedy beggar's eyes will look around. And she will be obliged to satisfy his demands because he is a reckless fellow—capable of any outrage. *Such a man is not put behind a bolted door;* he is capable of begging from strangers, capable of running off to the neighbours and telling them all the details of the Golovlevo affairs. Should he not be taken to the Susdal monastery? Yet

who knows whether that institution keeps its eye upon the purpose for which it was established, viz. to deliver embittered parents from the sight of good-for-nothing children ? "People also talk about a house of peace—yes, a house of peace—but how is this victim of forty to be got there ?" In a word, Arina Pétrovna was nearly beside herself at the thought of the contretemps which threatened to upset her peaceful life when Stépane should arrive.

"So I shall send him to you on the estate ? Keep him at your expense !" she commanded the steward ; "not at the cost of the estates, but at your cost !"

"Why so, lady ?"

"In order that you may not chatter ! Thus shall it be and not otherwise. Get out of my sight, bird of ill-omen !"

Anton Vassilieff turned about to the left, but Arina Pétrovna recalled him yet again.

"Stop a bit ! Then it's true he has fled to Golovlevo ?"

"Should I tell lies, lady ? He really did say : 'I'm going to the old one, in order to get my bread from her !'"

"Well, I'll just show him what kind of bread this old one is keeping in store for him."

"Oh, yes, lady, but he probably won't live long with you."

"How so ?"

"He coughs very badly, and there is a rattling in his left breast. He won't live much longer."

"That kind generally lives all the longer, my dear sir ! He will survive us all. If he coughs, let him cough—how does it affect him ? Well, we shall see here. Go now ! I want still to think matters over."

Arina Pétrovna thought over it the whole evening, and at last she found it best to call together the family council to decide on what should

be done. Such arrangements were otherwise not to her taste, but she had resolved for this occasion to secede from her autocracy that she might be able to keep herself independent of the advice of well-meaning persons by a decision arrived at by the whole family. About the result of the deliberations she did not reflect, and so she set herself with a lighter heart to write letters to Porphyrius and Paul, in which she bade them come over to Golovlevo at once.

* * * * *

Meanwhile the cause of the unrest, Stépane, the ne'er-do-well, was already on the journey from Moscow to Golovlevo. He had settled himself in Moscow in one of the so-called diligences, in which small merchants and trading peasants used formerly to ride, and do to some extent even now. The diligence came to Vladimir, and his soft-hearted host, Ivan Mikhaïlovitch, sent on Stépane Vladimiritch at his expense, paying for his seat and the cost of keep for the whole journey.

“Now, do just like that, Stépane Vladimiritch. You get out at the station, and go on foot just as you are up to maminka !” said Ivan Mikhaïlovitch to him.

“Yes, yes, yes,” answered the other ; “it’s rather far from the station, to go fifteen versts on foot ! I should have to present myself to her full of dust and dirt !”

“If maminka sees you there in those clothes, she may—and she will—take pity on you.”

“She will sympathize ; and why shouldn’t she ? Maminka is, after all, a good old woman.”

Stépane Golovlev was not more than forty, but his appearance made him look at least fifty. Life had so led him astray that he no longer

revealed any sign of being the son of a noble family, nor was there any outward trace of his university education observable, although he had listened to the ennobling words of knowledge. In stature he was tall, his hair generally dishevelled and apparently never washed. His whole appearance was marked by excesses in spirit-drinking, his chest had fallen in, and his fingers were long and bony ; his face was bloated, his hair and beard much streaked with grey. His voice was rough and harsh, and his eyes protruding and bloodshot with drink and continual sojourning in the open air. His clothes consisted of an old, completely worn-out Landwehr uniform, the ornaments of which had been taken off and sold ; his feet were covered by a pair of down-at-heels boots, which had become a foxy-red colour. Out of the torn uniform peeps a shirt, as black as if it had been smeared with soot, which, with all the cynicism of a serf, he calls his “home for fleas.” He looks gloomy and ill-tempered, but the expression is not that of an inward displeasure, but rather the consequence of a certain mental uneasiness, as if he would say : “Now, only one minute more, and I shall die of hunger like a worm !”

He speaks incessantly, inconsequently—jumping from one subject to another ; he speaks, whether Ivan Mikhaïlovitch is listening or has gently gone to sleep under the sound of his eloquence. He has a dreadful place in the diligence in which four persons are seated. With his feet compressed together, he has already gone three or four versts, and now feels an intolerable pain in the knee-joints. Nevertheless, despite the pain, he goes on continually chattering. Clouds of dust penetrate the side-windows of the vehicle ; now and then burning sunbeams pass over and overheat the inside of the diligence, but he gossips on.

"Yes, dear brother," chatters Stépane, "I have already endured much misery in my life, and the time is also coming when I shall 'go home!' I shan't make her poor by my eating; a piece of bread and tea, why shouldn't I get that? What d'you think, Ivan Mikhaïlovitch?"

"Why, maminka has many pieces."

"Yes, but not for me, you mean to say? She has also money, little friend, a whole heap of it, but, so far as I'm concerned, it would pain her to give me a few coppers. She has certainly always hated me. Why? What are you laughing at, brother? She will think of driving me away, but I won't go! If she doesn't give me food, I'll take it. I've served my country, and so everybody must now do something to support me. I'm only afraid of one thing: she won't give me any tobacco—*that's stupid.*"

"Yes, no doubt you'll have to dispense with tobacco."

"Well, after all, I have the bailiff on my side; after all the silly devil will be able to help his master in that!"

"Why not! But how if maminka forbade it?"

"H'm! In that case I should be quite in a hole! I only know one luxury which has remained from the time of my previous prosperity, and that is tobacco. When I had money, brother, I used to smoke daily a 'chetverka' of tobacco."

"You'll also probably have to do without brandy."

"Awful! It's so necessary for my health—it livens me up so. When we were marching to Sevastopol, we had not yet reached Serpukhov, when each man had already had a pint of brandy."

"Hoho! and did you keep your senses?"

"I don't remember exactly; but it seems so. I marched nearly as far as Kharkov, but you may

kill me on the spot if I know anything more! Only that we went through villages and towns, and a farmer made a speech to us at Tul. He howled, did the rascal. Yes, our noble country was then in the greatest straits; the farmers, the contractors, and the vendors—how did God contrive to save them from us!"

"And what profits maminka made at that time! In our village, hardly had half the soldiers returned home, when she, as the tale goes, made each one deliver up a recruit's quittance; the Government pays four hundred roubles for every such quittance."

"As you've said, brother-heart—I have a very clever mother. She ought really to have been a minister instead of peeling the scum from the soup in Golovlevo. She has been unjust to me, you know. She gave me a set-back, but I must respect her. She's clever as the devil—that's the main point! If she were not—where should we be now?—We should still be in the single village of Golovlevo, with 101 'souls'; but she, just think, what a diabolical fortune she has accumulated."

"Quite right; but your brothers have likewise a share in the fortune!"

"That's correct, only I won't be there to see it; that's the fact. I, brother, flew out through the chimney. My brothers will grow wealthy, especially the bloodsucker, Porphyrius. He sneaks into people's souls; he has gradually got the old witch entirely on his side; and is now sucking out her money and fortune. I foresaw. What a good chap Paul is! He secretly sent me tobacco. As soon as I reach Golovlevo, he shall get a letter from me: 'Dear brother, it's like this and this with me.' Ha, if I became rich!"

"What would you do then?"

"First of all, I should immediately cover you with gold."

"Why me? Only be quite contented if mamina is favourably disposed, and I'll also be contented."

"Well, brother, *attendez!* I should make you the chief inspector of all my possessions. Yes, friend, you fed and warmed the deserted soldier—God repay you! I should show you all my wealth. 'Eat, drink, and be merry,' I should say to you."

"No, master, don't speak any more about me; still, what other things would you do if you became rich?"

"I should at once buy a holy picture. At Kursk, I went into the Church of Vladichitsa. There I saw one. Ah, and how beautiful! Believe me, it ought not to remain there a minute longer!"

"But if they didn't propose to sell?"

"What would I have the money for? Why is the wretched metal in existence? If one hundred thousand were too little, they would take double. When I have money, I care for nothing except living for my pleasure. I wanted at that time to give three ducats through a freedman, but I was expected to pay five."

"And you didn't get it even for that?"

"As I said, I don't know now, brother, because I saw everything as if I were asleep. Possibly I had it and then forgot. I remember almost nothing now of two months of marching. Such a thing hasn't happened to you yet?"

Ivan Mikhailovitch was silent. Stépane Vladimirtch looked at him and was convinced that his companion was going to sleep. Gradually his nose almost touched his knee; then he would raise his head up once more only to lower it slowly again.

"H'm!" he remarked; "he's gone to sleep. You're becoming fat, friend, with tea and goodly

fare ! I can't get any sleep, even to-day, Sunday. What on earth am I to do now ? ”

He gazed round and became aware that the other passengers had also gone to sleep. A merchant, who sat opposite, kept continually knocking his head against a cross-beam, but he went on sleeping, and his face glistened as if smeared over with lacquer, whilst the flies buzzed about his mouth.

“ If I could only cram all the flies down his throat, Heaven would seem to him like a sheep-skin,” thinks Stépane. A good idea suddenly occurs to him, and his hand begins to steal its way to the trader in order to carry it out, but half-way he reflects and gives it up.

“ No, no more nonsense ! Sleep, friends, and rest ! Lord God, help Thy creatures,” he sings half aloud, and then takes a bottle from a wallet fastened at the side of the carriage, and puts it to his mouth.

“ There ! now it's alright ; but it's made me very warm. Shall I have another drop ? No, that's enough ; it's got to last till the station. Drinking is ugly, but I can't manage not to drink, and therefore I have no sleep ! ” Once more he swills from the bottle with a gurgle, and replaces it in the bag, and begins to fill his pipe. “ That's the proper way,” he goes on. “ First drink, then smoke. The old witch won't give me any tobacco. Will she give me any food ? Well, she is sure to have some little thing left from table. It's sad ; I had money, and have it no more ; I was a man, and am now a man no longer. Such is life. To-day you drink and enjoy yourself and smoke your pipe——

“ ‘ And to-morrow, child of man, where art thou ? ’

I should really like something to eat now. Doctors

declare that drinking is only useful if you have something to eat at the same time. So said the worthy Smaragd when we were marching through Oboan. Was it Oboan? H'm! It may have been Kromy. The sole question now, however, is to get something to eat. Wait a bit! I've got three French rolls and a sausage in my pocket. Heavens! I wish I'd bought caviar instead!

"Just look how that fellow sleeps; what songs he is singing through his nose."

"Ivan Mikhaïlovitch, hi! Ivan Mikhaïlovitch!" cries Stépane. The person in question wakes up, but can't imagine for the moment where he is, and how he happens to be sitting opposite his master.

"I just began to dream——" he begins.

"Sleep on, friend; I only wanted to ask you where our provender-bag is."

"D'yous want to eat?"

"Certainly, where's the bottle?"

Stépane Vladimiritch drinks again, and then falls to on the sausage, which is fearfully salty and so stone-hard that he can only cut it up with the point of the knife.

"We ought to be having stock-fish now," he remarks.

"Please excuse me, master, I quite forgot them. I reminded my wife every morning to remember the stock-fish—and now they're forgotten."

"It doesn't matter. There's the sausage. We had none on campaign. Papa once told me two Englishmen had made a bet; one of them was to eat a broken-down cat—and he ate it."

"Brr—he ate it?"

"Yes, but he felt ill afterwards. He put himself to rights with rum, emptying two bottles at once, one after the other, as fast as he could do it. The other Englishman then made a bet that he would live a whole year solely on sugar."

"Did he win?"

"No; only two days were wanting to complete the year, when he froze. What d'you think of the brandy?"

"I've drunk none from childhood."

"So you've bedewed yourself with tea only? That's not so bad, brother; no doubt that's why your belly has grown so. Anyhow, one must be prudent with tea. Because if you drink a little cup you must take a little rum with it. Tea gathers dampness, but brandy dissipates it. Isn't it like that?"

"I don't know. You scholarly people must know better."

"Yes, yes; on campaign we never saw either coffee or tea. But brandy—it was glorious; I unscrewed the field-flask, filled it and emptied it. We had to march so rapidly at that time that I was ten days without a wash."

"You certainly had to go through much hardship!"

"Much and not much! When we were going forward it was easier. There's enough to eat, and you can drink all you know; but on the return journey we were not looked after." Gollovlev had gnawed his sausage without result; he at last succeeded in biting a piece off.

"Very salt, brother-heart," he observed. "Well, I'm not spoilt. No tobacco, no tea, and no brandy. What you said was true. Yes, yes, brother."

There was a wait of four hours at the posting-station, because the horses had to be fed. Gollovlev busied himself with the provisions, as he felt a violent hunger, whilst the other passengers entered the station-building for refreshment. After trying vainly to sleep, he thought it best to follow the other travellers into the dining-room. Here, on a table, the cabbage-soup (*shchi*) was already

steaming, and next to it, in a wooden dish, lay a big piece of roast beef, which Ivan Mikhaïlovitch was just engaged in cutting up into small pieces. Gollovlev sat a little way off and smoked his pipe, without knowing how he could stifle his hunger.

"Bread and salt!" he cried at last. "That *shchi* there seems very fat?"

"Oh! the *shchi*, master," replied Ivan Mikhaïlovitch. "Please order a portion for yourself."

"No, I only wanted to make a remark. I am full up."

"Full of what? You've eaten a bit of sausage. Eat; I'll have another table laid for you. Eat to my health! Madame! Another cover!"

The travellers sit silently at their meal, and only now and then look at each other. Gollovlev thought perhaps they might be regarding him as an inferior, although he had played master during the whole journey, not without a certain impudence, and had treated Ivan Mikhaïlovitch that way. His brows were contracted in a frown, and he blew mighty clouds of smoke out of his mouth. Gladly would he have refused the meal, but hunger so tortured him that he addressed himself like a beast of prey to the plate of *shchi* set before him, the contents of which vanished in a trice. But with the feeling of satiety, his devil-may-careness at once returned, and, as if he had never been what he was, he turned to Ivan Mikhaïlovitch:

"Well, my cashier, now you must pay for me, whilst I visit the hayloft, and have a talk with *Khrapovitski*." *

He turned and went up to the hay-loft, where, with his overfilled stomach, he soon slept the sleep of the just. He woke again after five hours; he saw the horses standing at their empty bins and rubbing their heads against the edges.

* "Khrapet" = (in Russian) "snoring."

" You rascal, are you still sleeping ? " he growled at the dreaming coachman. " We're in a hurry, and there he is, quite coolly dreaming."

Then came the journey to the posting-station, from which leads the road to Golovlevo. Stépane Gollovlev became gradually more introspective, his mood grew serious and taciturn, and now it was Ivan Mikhaïlovitch who had to cheer him up, and beg of him to take away the pipe.

" When you come to the estate, master, throw the pipe into the nettles ! You will find it there again later on ! "

The horses which were to take Ivan Mikhaïlovitch back stood ready, and the moment of parting was at hand.

" Good-bye, brother-heart," said Gollovlev, in a tremulous voice, as he kissed Ivan Mikhaïlovitch ; " she will swallow me up ! "

" God is kind, and you are not too timorous."

" She will swallow me up," repeated Stépane Vladimiritch with such conviction that Ivan Mikhaïlovitch involuntarily dropped his eyes.

With these words Gollovlev turned sharply in the direction in which lay the estate, and began to step out, leaning on a gnarled stick, which he had broken off a tree.

Ivan Mikhaïlovitch comes running up behind him.

" Stop, stop, master ! " he exclaims, on reaching him. " When I was recently cleaning your uniform, I found three roubles in a side-pocket ; don't lose them by mistake ! "

Stépane Vladimiritch is utterly dumbfounded, and does not know what to do. At length he stretches out his hand to Ivan, and says, with tears in his eyes :

" I understand you—for tobacco for the old soldier—I thank you ! But so far as the rest goes

she will swallow me up, good friend ; think of my words—she'll swallow me up."

Gollovlev turns again to his path, and five minutes later his grey Landwehr cap shows in the distance, now disappearing, now cropping up again in the woody bushes. It is still early in the day, not more than about six ; the morning air breathes goldenly over the district, scarcely allowing the first rays of the sun, which is appearing on the horizon, to penetrate. The grass glitters with dew, and the atmosphere is filled with the perfume of firs, larches, and herbs. The path zig-zags down to the lower ground, where countless flocks of birds are twittering.

Stépane Vladimiritch, however, observes nothing of all this ; all his lightheartedness has suddenly left him, and he walks as if to the Last Judgment. One idea alone absorbs his mind : Three, four hours more and he is there ! He knows the old life at Golovlevo, and he suddenly feels as if its doors were being opened to him, and hardly has he trodden over the threshold of the opened door, than its leaves fall together again—and everything is over.

Memories recur to him which, if they do not exactly refer to himself, are yet strikingly characteristic of life at Golovlevo. There is old uncle Michael Petrovitch, usually nicknamed Mishka the Prodigal, who is also reckoned among the failures, and was brought by grandfather Peter Ibanich to his daughter Arina at Golovlevo, where he lives with the common herd, and eats out of the same dish as the house-dog, Tresorka. Further, there is aunt Vera Mikhaïlovna, who used to eat alms-bread at her brother's, Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch, at Golovlevo, and died of "excessive moderation in food," because Arina Pétrovna reproached her with every little bit she ate, every bundle of wood with which she

heated her room. That is how it will turn out presently for himself; the endless succession of gloomy days which have vanished as if into an abyss comes back to Stépane, and involuntarily he closes his eyes. Henceforth he is to be alone with the wicked old woman, who is not only wicked, but accustomed to limitless obedience. The old woman will let him die—not by torture, but by forgetfulness; he must not speak with anyone or go anywhere—or she is sure to be there, the all-powerful one, with the piercing, ominous look. The idea of that future filled him with such terror that he stopped by a tree and beat his forehead with his hands. His whole life, in all its wretchedness, futility, and farcicalness, suddenly came clearly before his mind's eye. He is now going to Golovlevo—he knows what to expect there—and yet he is going on, although he scarcely has the heart for it. But there is no other way. The poorest man may work for himself, earn bread—only he may not! This idea occurs to him like the former ones. He had depicted to himself all conceivable prospects regarding the future, but they were always of the kind which culminated in the thought of inherited wealth, and never took any account of such a thing as work. Now came the settlement of all those delusions, in the midst of which the past had sunk without leaving a trace. A bitter settlement, which expressed itself in the phrase: "She will swallow me up."

It was about nine o'clock in the morning when Golovlevo's white belfry peeped up out of the wood. Stépane Vladimiritch's face was pale and his hands trembled. He took off his cap and crossed himself. The parable of the lost son and his return home occurred to him. He looked about for the boundary-stone by the wayside—he was now on Golovlevo soil, that lonely district which had borne

him, nourished him, and then dismissed him into the world, in order now to receive him back again. The sun was already high in the heavens and the great fields spread far and wide beneath its rays, but he grew pale and paler, and felt himself shivering with an icy cold.

He went to the churchyard, and there courage returned to him. The manor-house looked peacefully out of the trees, as if nothing especial had ever happened there ; but the view of it worked on Stépane like the vision of a Medusa-head. The grave lent him courage, however. "Grave and death," he repeated unconsciously to himself. He determined not to go straight to the house, but betook himself to the priest, and sent him to give the news of his arrival, and inquire whether maminka would receive him.

The pope's wife crossed herself as he appeared, and was in a panic about her egg-cakes ; the village children stood all round him, and stared at the son of the master with unintelligent eyes. The men who passed took their hats off silently, and gazed inquiringly at him, whilst an old man belonging to the manor-house came up to him, greeted him, and kissed his hand. They all knew that a wastrel was before them, who had returned to this lonely place, returned for ever, in order never to leave it again, and to be allowed at the utmost to visit the churchyard ; and at the thought of it the hearts of all became soft.

At last came the pope, and declared maminka was ready to receive Stépane Vladimiritch. In ten minutes he stood before her. Arina Pétrovna met him with a severe, solemn demeanour, and icily measured him from head to foot ; but she did not utter the least reproach. She did not allow her son to enter her living-rooms, but pointed to the servants' wing and ordered the young master to be

taken to papa through the second wing. The old man was dreaming, in a white night-cap, on his bed, which was quite white with its white coverlet ; everything about him was white, as if he were a corpse. When he caught sight of his son, he started up and laughed like a lunatic.

“ What, my dovelet, have you fallen into the witch’s claws ? ” he exclaimed, whilst Stépane Vladimiritch kissed his hand. Then he crowed like a cock, laughed again and again, and cried out several times : “ She’s going to eat him up, she’s going to eat him up ! ”

“ She’ll devour him ! ” was the echo in Stepane’s soul.

His fears were being realised. He had been taken to a particular room in the wing where the counting-house was. Linen was brought there to him from the domestic supply, and an old suit of the master of the house, which he put on mechanically. The doors had opened slowly, they had let him in and—were shut.

There now followed a succession of dull, monotonous days, which, one after the other, sank back into the grey sea of time. Arina Pétrovna did not give her son any occupation, nor was he any longer allowed to visit his father. After a time the manager, Phinogeus Ipatich, informed him of a “ proposal ” of the maminka, which was to the effect that he would receive board and lodging and clothes, as well as a pound of Valer tobacco monthly. He listened to his mother’s proposal and merely answered :

“ Ha ! the old woman ! She has smelt out that the Shukov tobacco costs two roubles, whilst the Valer only costs one rouble, ninety kopecks ! Really, she has made preparations to bestow gifts on me as a beggar.”

The signs of a moral sobering which had displayed

themselves during those hours near the village had again vanished. Frivolity asserted its ancient rights, and there followed with it his adaptation to his mother's decisions. The consciousness of the hopelessness and dungeon-like character of his future, which had once entered into his reflections, sped with every day more swiftly into the mists of the past and finally passed completely away. He was now daily on the scene, and was impudently bold and shameless, whilst he maliciously attempted to nullify or introduce confusion into everything undertaken, every kind of business. But what part could his intentions and plans play now, since the course of the whole of the rest of his life, depicted clearly and in detail, was determined in the brain of Arina Pétrovna.

Stépane Vladimiritch went too and fro in his distant room for whole days together, without taking his pipe one moment from his mouth, and sang snatches of songs wherein church music was gaily mixed with worldly airs of all kinds. If he found the secretary present in the counting-house, he would go up to him and reckon up for him Arina Pétrovna's incomings.

"And how is she disposing of this mass of money ?" he would then ask in wonderment, after he had reckoned up more than eighty thousand roubles. "She does not give it to the brothers, she herself lives sparingly, and the father she feeds with salted pieces of bacon. Could it be she gambles on the Bourse ? Impossible !"

Phinogeus Ipatich also came sometimes to the counting-house with taxes, and when he reckoned up all the money on the counting-house table, Stépane Vladimiritch's eyes glittered greedily.

"Ha ! what an abyss of riches !" he would cry; "and all that flows down *her* throat ; not that she would give her son even the smallest eoin and

say : ‘Here, my son, you who have had so much sorrow, here’s money for wine and tobacco !’ ”

And then he began carrying on endless and cynical discussions with Jacob, the secretary, as to how his mother’s heart might possibly be softened without her suspecting his doing anything in the matter.

“One of my friends in Moscow was a citizen, who knew a ‘magic word,’ ” declared Gollovlev. “If his mother refused to give him money at any time, he always uttered the ‘word’ and she at once got cramps in the hands and feet.”

“What an evil thing !” answered Jacob.

“Well, take it as you please, it is true there is such a ‘word.’ Another told me also this : You must lay a living frog at midnight on an ants’ heap. The ants quickly eat it all up, so that only the skeleton is left ; this is put in again, and every wish one has is bound to be fulfilled.”

“Ah ! I must try that at once !”

“All right, my friend, but it’s necessary for a curse to rest on it. Were that not the case, a witch would take me like a devil in her claws.”

Long hours were spent in such talk, but no remedy was found. Either you had to curse yourself in such cases, or to sell your soul to the devil. So the simple result was that Stépane quietly went on living as his mother had determined, and further improved his position by small voluntary tributes which he raised from the peasants for himself, especially in the way of tobacco, tea and sugar. His board was very scanty, for the servants generally brought him what remained over from his mother’s table, and as Arina Pétrovna was moderate to the point of avarice, it may be imagined that his share was not large. That caused him especial pain, because, from the time brandy became forbidden fruit to him, he felt a distinctly bigger

appetite. From morning till night he was hungry, and thought of nothing but filling himself up. He watched when maminka rested a bit, and ran into the kitchen, looked into the servants' hall, and was everywhere where anything to eat might be snatched. After some time had elapsed, he would sit at his open window and spy out where anyone was having a meal. If a serf came by, he stopped him, and required a present from him, either an egg or hardbake.

Immediately upon their first meeting, Arina Pétrovna had shown him the whole programme of her domestic arrangements. "Fit yourself in with these!" she had observed. "There is a corner in the counting-house for you, your meals you get from my table, and don't bother about the rest, my dear! Your brothers will soon be here; what sort of a decision they will come to about you—that will duly be known. I will take no sin upon myself—what they determine, shall be so."

And he was now impatiently awaiting his brothers' arrival. He did not reflect what influence their arrival might have on his further fate; he was chiefly occupied with the problem whether Paul would bring any tobacco, and how much.

"Maybe, I'll also get some money out of him," he added, musingly. "The bloodsucker, Porphyrius, will give me none, but Paul certainly will; I shall say to him: 'Give the poor soldier something for wine, brother,' and he will do so. Besides, why shouldn't he?"

Time went by, but he did not notice it. Whilst he did absolutely nothing, he yet did not feel the oppressive monotony. It only grew tedious in the evenings, because the secretary went off at eight, and Arina Pétrovna sent him no candle, as she considered nobody going to and fro in a room needed any illumination.

Presently he became accustomed to it, and even began to love the darkness, for then the power of fancy was more active and carried him far, far away from dreary Golovlevo. Only one thing disquieted him : he suffered from anxious feelings and tightness in the chest, especially when he went to bed to sleep. He sometimes jumped out of the bed and ran about the room, pressing his hand on the left side of his breast.

"Oh, exactly as if I were going to die !" he thought ; "but no, I shall not die !" Next morning the secretary confided to him that his brothers had arrived in the night, and involuntarily he began to tremble and grew pale. Something childish stirred in him ; he longed to run into the house and see how they dressed, what beds had been put up for them, and whether they possessed as costly necessaries as he had once seen in the room of a Landwehr captain. He wanted to hear how they talked with maminka, see what they got for lunch. Briefly, he wanted again to take part in that life he had so foolishly thrust away from himself, wanted to cast himself at his mother's feet, implore her forgiveness, and then consume a stalled ox for joy. Everything was still quiet in the house, so he visited the cook in the kitchen, and learnt that the lunch programme was made up of : *shchi* of fresh cabbage, but only a small pot full, for even soup from the day before was to be warmed up ; half a cold goose ; two cutlets, roast mutton, four gherkins, and plum jam.

"The soup from yesterday, the half goose and the roast mutton, friend, will be for me," said he to the cook ; "there will not be a pastry for me."

"As it shall please the maminka, master."

"Yes, yes ; and there was once a time when I ate the best of poultry ! Yes, I made a bet with Lieutenant Gremykin that I'd eat fifteen birds—

and I won. I couldn't bear the sight of a bird for a whole month after."

"But now you'd eat them again?"

"I shan't be offered any; far from it. They would rather let them rot. But what is there for breakfast?"

"Liver, *pilz* in milk, and fish."

"Ah, you'll send me a fish, won't you? Try, friend."

"I'll try. Do like this, master. As soon as your brothers have sat down to table, send the secretary here; he can secretly bring you a couple of fish hidden in his bosom."

Stépane Vladimiritch waited the whole morning with the idea that his brothers might possibly come to him. At eleven o'clock the secretary brought the promised fish, and announced that the brothers had just breakfasted, and had then shut themselves in with maminka in the bedroom.

* * * * *

Arina Pétrovna received her sons with a forced calm, as if overwhelmed by grief. Two maids supported her under the arms; her grey locks were visible under her cap, her head tottered from one side to the other, and her feet seemed hardly able to support her. She especially liked to play the part of the righteous mother worn out with cares when in her children's presence, and on such occasions she could only move with difficulty, and clung to the helping hands of her maids. Stépane nicknamed these solemn pieces of acting a hierarchical service for his mother, and herself he called the hierarchess, whilst he gave the servants, Polka and Julka, the title of sceptre-bearers.

As it was already night, the greeting was very monosyllabic. Silently she gave her sons her hand

to kiss, silently she kissed and "crossed" them, and when Porphyrius Vladimiritch expressed the desire to be allowed to chat away the rest of the night with dear, good mamma, she merely beckoned with her hand and said :

" Go now ! Just have a rest after your journey. There is no time now for discussion. We shall speak to-morrow."

Next morning, the two sons visited their father, to kiss his hands, but he refused them. He lay with closed eyes in bed, and on their entering cried :

" The assessors have come to judge ! Get out, Pharisees, get out ! "

Porphyrius left his father's room in agitation, and with a face blurred with tears, whilst Paul laid his thumb on his nose.

" He was not good to us, dearest maminka ; oh, so unfriendly !" exclaimed Porphyrius, throwing himself on his mother's breast.

" I suppose he's very weak to-day ? "

" So weak, oh, so weak ! He is hardly still in the land of the living."

" Well, he is still breathing."

" Ah ! dearest mother ! Your life was truly never rich in joy, but who could have dreamt of so much ill-luck ? People wonder how it is you have the strength to endure these ordeals."

" What can one not endure, my son, if God so wills it ? "

Arina Pétrovna closed her eyes, as if she thought it quite right that all other persons should live without care and worry, and find their tables covered for them, whilst she alone had to bear anxiety and care for all.

" Yes, my son," she remarked after a minute's pause, " the years are now beginning to weigh heavy on me. However, my children are provided for, so I can go to rest. Four thousand souls !

To manage such an estate in my years ! To keep a vigilant eye for every kind of business; to go the rounds with the bailiffs ! They never look one straight in the face. They look at us with one eye, whilst they are spying out for their own advantage with the other. And then the common herd—those servile souls ! Well, and what are you doing ? ” she broke off suddenly, turning to Paul : “ Have you anything wrong with your nose ? ”

“ Maybe,” rejoined Paul Vladimiritch with a start, interrupting his nasal occupation.

“ I should have thought your father was everything to you, and you would have been sorry for him.”

“ Oh, the father ! He’s the same as ever, just as he was ten years ago. But why do you always want to create unpleasantness with me ? ”

“ Why should I, my son ? I am your mother after all. Look at Porphyrius ! He is obliging and full of sympathy, just as a good son should be, but you don’t look once at your mother, but look gloomily away, as if I were not your mother, but some evil magician. Well ! don’t bite me ! Come, be friendly——”

“ Yes, but what should I——”

“ Wait, be silent a moment, and let your mother speak : Do you remember it is written, ‘ Honour father and mother, so that it may go well with you ’ ? Will you not enjoy that blessing ? ”

Paul Vladimiritch was silent and stared unintelligently at his mother.

“ You see, you’re silent,” went on Arina Pétrovna ; “ you feel yourself hit. Well, God be with you. We shall put off the conversation to a more friendly meeting. God, dear son, sees everything, and I ? Ah, how deeply I see through you. Children, children, think of your mother, when she shall lie

in the grave—think of her—it will soon be too late."

"Maminka," cried Porphyrius, "away with such melancholy ideas!"

"We must all die," my son, replied Arina Pétrovna feelingly; "such ideas are not melancholy, but exalted. I'm now on the decline, children. Ah, how rapidly! I have no more left of my early strength—weakness and illness are attacking me! Even these girls here observe it, and they don't merely whisper it gently in my ears, because if I utter a word they give two in reply. And if I say anything more they give ten. I have only one threat for them, namely, that I shall make a present of them to the young masters."

Tea was now handed round, and then followed breakfast, at which Arina Pétrovna was very pleasant and affable. At the conclusion, she invited her sons to follow her into her bedroom.

After the door was locked, Arina Pétrovna went without delay about the business, for which she had summoned the family council.

"Stépane, the good-for-nothing, is there again."

"We heard about it," cried Porphyrius, ironically, and with the comfortable calmness of a man who has eaten his fill and more.

"He's there. The way he lived inevitably brought him to it! Time after time I've warned and reprimanded him, but all to no use! He has to beg his daily bread from his old mother. How much dislike has he not shown towards me? What have I not had to suffer from his escapades? What trouble it cost me to get him into a berth?—and all as uselessly as if I had tried to wash a Moor white! At last I reflected: if he is unable to look after himself, what is my duty? I'll give him a property, I concluded; who knows whether the effect of responsibility may not put him on a more righteous

track? I gave him a property. I also gave him a house as well as twelve thousand silver roubles—and what's the result? After a few years, I've got him hanging again round my neck. Should I stand much more of that?"

Porphyrius gazed at the bed-covering and shook his head meditatively.

"That's a business which is bound to cause the dear maminka much grave uneasiness. She might live here so peacefully, and quietly, and there need not be anything to cause her sorrow—yes, yes, that's a bad job."

Arina Pétrovna, who did not like to have the flow of her thoughts interrupted, was not pleased with Porphyrius' utterance.

"Let your head-shaking bide a bit," she went on, "and hear further. Fancy my feelings when I learnt he had thrown away his paternal estate like a gnawed bone into a dust-bin! Fancy my feelings—I, who have not slept at nights, have refrained from sufficient food—when I reflected that he bought a gambling-set in the bazaar and then threw it out of the window! So that was what happened to his property."

"Oh, maminka, what mad monkey-tricks!" Porphyrius Vladimiritch again broke in; but Arina went on:

"Wait yet a moment! When I wish it, give me your opinion! Why, supposing the booby had come to me and said, 'I'm guilty, maminka, I could not do otherwise!' I might, perhaps, have found a way, if there had still been time, to get the house back. The unworthy son did not understand how to use it—perhaps it's now in the possession of worthier children. The house brought in fifteen per cent. interest yearly, and I might possibly have given him another thousand roubles in his distress. But as things are—! I live here and see and learn

nothing ; and he had schemed the whole affair deliberately. I personally paid twelve thousand roubles for the house, and he lost it by auction for eight thousand."

"The main point, maminka, that he dealt equally base with the heritage of his parents," added Porphyrius quickly, as if afraid to be silenced again.

"So it is. My money is not badly earned, because I have not amassed it by dancing and bell-ringing, but with toil and sweat. How I won our wealth ! When I married your father he possessed only Golovlevo with 101 souls ; they were scattered about, twenty here, thirty there ; half a hundred lived together. I myself had nothing ; and what a big property I have brought together ! Four thousand souls ! You can hardly take it in ! If I wanted also to take them with me into the grave, I can't. D'you think I found it easy to get hold of those four thousand ? No, dear child, not easy, not at all easy. I spent many a sleepless night, in which I had to come to a quick decision, so that others did not anticipate me, so that no other got the advantage, and no kopeck was lost ! And what I have endured ! Rain, bad weather, ice—nothing kept me away. It was only later that I could indulge myself in the luxury of a *tarantass* (travelling-carriage) ; in the very earliest period I rode with a peasant's cart, to which a *kibitka* was attached ; two horses were harnessed in front, and away we went to Moseow. I progressed very slowly at that time ; and now how has this hardly won fortune been squandered by that single fellow ? When you go to Moscow, just turn once into the restaurant near the Rogoshska, and notice what filth and stenches I must have endured there ! I grudged the groschen for the drive, and I went on my own feet from the Rogoshska to the Soljanka.

And how astonished the housekeepers were : ‘Lady,’ they cried, ‘you are still young and so rich, and yet you exert yourself so greatly?’ But I was silent and was patient. I had for the first time a sum of thirty thousand roubles with me—your father’s possessions were too far away, and I had sold them with their one hundred souls—with that sum I now wanted to buy one thousand souls. I had a mass said in the Iverska church, and went to the Soljanka to try my luck. And lo and behold! as if the protecting saint had seen my bitter tears, she allowed me to accumulate a fortune. I had scarce made a bid with my thirty thousand roubles, than the whole auction was at an end ; at first there were angry scenes about it, but the excitement died down, and then a complete stillness. The auctioneer stood up and congratulated me, but I heard nothing of what he spoke. The lawyer, Ivan Nikolaitch, next approached me ; I stood like a column, without hearing him. And how great is God’s goodness! Just think ; if, during my confusion, anybody had suddenly called out, ‘I give thirty-five thousand roubles,’ I should certainly have called out unreflectingly, ‘forty thousand.’ And where could I have got the money?”

Arina Pétrovna had already often sung to her sons the epic story of the first winning of her riches, and it did not lose the charm of novelty in their eyes.

Porphyrius listened to his mother, half smiling, half sighing ; now he would let his eyes rove here and there, now he would carefully scan her physical contours. Paul Vladimiritch sat with wide-open eyes, like a child listening to a well-known but not tedious tale.

“Do you think your mother has amassed her wealth in vain?” continued Arina Pétrovna. “No, my children! I lay six weeks in a fever

after this first purchase. How it must pain me now to see that, after all those exertions and torments, my bitter-won money has been thrown contemptuously into the gutter ! ”

A minute’s silence ensued. Porphyrius was ready to tear his clothes with grief, but he was afraid no one in the village could then respect him. Paul Vladimiritch, at the close of the story, immediately fell into his usual apathy, and his face resumed the corresponding expression.

“ I have told you everything now,” began Arina Pétrovna afresh ; “ now come to a decision about me and him, the rascal.”

Porphyrius became conscious that it was now “ a festal day in his street,” and preened himself like a nightingale. But like a genuine “ blood-sucker,” he did not attack the subject directly, but started with roundabout circumlocutions.

“ If you permit me, dearest mother, to give my opinion, it consists in two words : Children are in duty bound to confess their faults to their parents, to accept their decisions quietly, and look after them in old age—that’s the chief thing ! But what are children, dearest mother ? They are the loving creatures who owe their parents everything, from their birth to the last costume they wear. Whilst, therefore, parents may judge children, children can never judge parents. The children’s duty is reverence, but not the holding of judgment. You have just said : ‘ Come to a judgment about me and him.’ That is noble-hearted, dearest mamina, veritably exalted ! But how could we think about it without fear ? From the first day of our birth onwards we have ever been clothed with kindness from head to foot. It is indeed your will, but it would be no judgment, but a sacrilege ! A simple sacrilege, quite assuredly——”

“ Stop ! Listen to me. If you say you cannot

sit in judgment on me, acquit me, and judge that man ! ” interrupted Arina Pétrovna, who listened attentively but tried in vain to plumb him. What sort of a plan had Porphyrius at the back of his head ?

“ No, maminka, even that I cannot do, or rather I don’t dare to and have no right to ; I can neither acquit nor accuse nor judge. You, mother, alone, know how to deal with us, your children ! If we obey, reward us, if we go wrong, punish us ! It is our affair to accuse ourselves, but not to exercise criticism. And if you at the moment of parental wrath exceed moderation in punishment, even then we must not grumble, because the ways of Providence are hidden from us. Who knows whether it was not peculiarly necessary ? So here, too, maybe, it is necessary. Our brother Stépane has acted meanly, basely ; but you alone can determine the degree of punishment which he has deserved. You don’t want to ! You must find a way out, dearest maminka, because you alone know it. Ah, dear maminka, that’s no sin on your part ! Oh, no ! I mean that whatever you may be pleased to decide about our brother’s fate, so shall it be—but you yourself, what sad thoughts you arouse in me ! ”

“ All right. And what’s your opinion ? ” Arina Pétrovna turned to Paul.

“ I ? D’you want to hear mine also ? ” he answered, as if awakening from a deep sleep. Bracing himself up he continuued : “ Of course, he’s guilty ; he ought to be torn in pieces ; pulverised in a mortar ; that’s my opinion.”

After Paul had incoherently uttered these sentences, he remained sitting with his mouth wide open and stared at his mother as if he did not trust his own ears.

“ Well, my dear—we shall see about you later ! ”

broke in Arina Pétrovna coldly. “ You wish, I see, to tread in Stépane’s tracks; but don’t deceive yourself, my son ! You will atone for it later—that’s what’ll happen ! ”

“ What ? I’ve done nothing ! I speak as you want me ! What is there irreverent in that ? ” exclaimed Paul Vladimiritch.

“ Later on, my friend, later on, I’ll talk with you ! You think because you are an officer nothing can hit you ? Ah, it will hit you, my dear, and how hard it will hit you !—Then don’t either of you want to give judgment ? ”

“ I, dearest maminka——”

“ And I ? What shall I say ? For all I care he can be cut to——”

“ Silence, for Christ’s sake ! you imbecile ! ” Arina Pétrovna knew she had the right to call him “ bad son,” but as they had just celebrated their meeting together again she restrained herself.

“ Well, if you don’t wish to pass judgment, I must do so myself, and my decision is : I will, as a test, treat him kindly once again and present him with the small paternal property of Vologodsk ; I will have a small house built for him, and then he may live there, getting his sustenance from the peasants.”

Although Porphyrius had refrained from a judgment on his brother, his mother’s leniency moved him so extraordinarily, that he could not make up his mind to conceal from her certain dangers which this new arrangement might possibly contain in itself.

“ Maminka,” he said, “ you are more than magnanimous. You have to judge about a transaction which is mean, base ; and yet everything is suddenly forgotten and forgiven ! Truly noble beyond words ! But, excuse me, I’m afraid, dearest, for you ; if you want to, pass judgment

on me, but, in your place, I should not act like that."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. Possibly I don't possess as much greatness of heart, and I certainly can't have your motherly love. How if brother Stépane, in his degeneracy, deals with this second parental estate exactly as with the first?"

It seemed as if this argument illuminated Arina's mind, but another idea occurred to her at the same time.

"The estate of Vologodsk belongs to the family," she almost hissed between her teeth; "sooner or later a further portion of the paternal fortune will after all come to him."

"I understand, dearest maminka——"

"If you understand me, you must also understand that when in possession of the village of Vologodsk, he can be obliged to declare himself satisfied, contented with his heritage."

"I understand that, too, dear maminka. But you would then be committing a great blunder with your kindness. It is needful that as soon as you have bought him the house, he should declare he has no more claim on the patrimony."

"I didn't think of that."

"Then I suppose he'd have to sign some kind of document. But oh! with your love and goodness—oh, what a big mistake, what a mistake!"

"Oh! and again oh! Why, I guess you'd go on lamenting as long as there was time! Now you're praising your mother, but, when it comes to acting, you hesitate! Nevertheless, it is not a question of a document now. I can indeed require a document from him! But papa will not die soon, and for so long we must maintain the ne'er-do-well. Perhaps he won't be willing to sign a document, but then we can say to him at once:

Wait till your father dies ! I also want to know this : don't you like my settling the village of Vologodsk on him ? ”

“ He'll squander it, dearest ; he played ducks and drakes with the house, and it'll be the same with the village ! ”

“ If he squanders it, he'll have to rely on himself alone ! ”

“ And will return to you again.”

“ No, that would never happen, he would never dare appear on my threshold again. I would refuse him not only bread but water even, and the people will not condemn me on that account. God will not punish me. Yes, he played the fool with his house and fortune ; pray, am I his sheet-anchor so that I shall have to worry about him all my life ? I have other children besides.”

“ And yet he will come back. He's impudently bold, dearest maminka ! ”

“ I tell you I won't allow him over the threshold.”

Arina Pétrovna was silent and looked through the window. She had to admit to herself that the village would only free her for a short time from her degenerate son, that despite all he would end by chucking it away and returning to her, and that then she, as mother, would not be able to refuse him a corner. But the idea that this hater of her should go on living in her near neighbourhood, that although interned in the counting-house, he followed her thoughts every moment like Providence—that idea had discomfited her to such a degree that her whole body involuntarily trembled.

“ Never ! ” she cried out at last, and banged her fist on the table, as she sprang up from the armchair.

Porphyrius Vladimiritch gazed at his dear, darling maminka, and merely shook his head mechanically.

" You are excited, maminka ? " he asked in a soft, gentle tone of voice, as if he would caress her with it.

" Well, then, what should I give him from your standpoint ? "

" Oh ! You won your wealth by patience. In patience is everything. D'you think God does not see it ? He sees everything, dearest maminka. We sit here and decide this and that, whilst He has already decided."

Arina Pétrovna, however, knew very well that the " Bloodsucker " was only casting snares, and finally she burst out in violent wrath.

" Are you trying to make a fool of me ? " she cried. " Your mother is speaking about serious business, and you are making a farce of it ! Don't go on muttering ! Speak out ! You want him to remain round his mother's neck in Golovlevo, eh ? "

" Maminka, it depends entirely on you whether you leave him in his present position in order to get from him the renunciation of any further inheritance."

" All right ; I knew you would give me that advice. Good. Suppose things went according to your wishes, how intolerable to me would be the constant sight of that fellow ? Doesn't anyone pity me ? I was still young when I was burdened already with a cross, and shall I not be delivered from it even in old age ? But to change the subject. So long as papa is alive, he's to remain at Golovlevo, and also shall not die of hunger. But what later ? "

" Maminka, dearest maminka, why these gloomy thoughts ? "

" Whether gloomy or bright, we've got to think about these things ! We're no longer children. If we both died—what would then happen to him ? "

"Maminka, have you no hope in us, your children? Have we been brought up so badly by you?" Porphyrius turned one of those strange looks on her, which had always bewildered her.

"He's feeling about with his snares," echoed in her soul.

"I shall help the poor man with the greatest joy. The rich man? God be with him! The rich man has enough already! But the poor—do you know what Christ says about the poor?"

Porphyrius got up and kissed maminka's hand.

"Maminka, allow me to present my brother with two pounds of tobacco," he said.

Arina Pétrovna gave no answer. She looked at him and thought: Is he really such a bloodsucker that he would drive his own brother into the streets?

"Do as you please! If he's to stop in Golovlevo, well, let it be so," she said at length. "You have conquered me by your 'just as you please, maminka.' No doubt you'll finally make even myself dance to your pipe. But just listen to this: He hates me, and has derided me throughout his life; nevertheless, if you drive him out of doors, or hand him over to the common people—you shall live without my blessing! Never, never shall you receive it! Now you two go to him; he may become conscious of his fool's role when he sees you."

The sons departed; Arina Pétrovna stood at the window and followed them with her eyes, noting how they strode over the well-tended courtyard to the counting-house without exchanging a word. Porphyrius was taking off his headgear every moment and crossing himself: firstly before the church, which peeped over from a distance, then before the sanctuary, the wooden icon, in front of which stood a receptacle for small offerings.

Paul seemed unable to divorce his eyes from the new boots he was wearing, and on whose tips the sunbeams glittered. "And wherefore have I garnered together, kept vigil whole nights, and not eaten sufficiently!" was the tone of her reflections.

* * * * *

The brothers departed, and the Golovlevo estate was again left to its lonely self. Arina Pétrovna gave herself up to her domestic occupations with tireless zeal. The knocking of the cook's knife resounded in the kitchen, there was a redoubling of activity in the office, in the barns, cattle-folds, and cellars. The summer came to an end, and then came the time for preserving, salting, and other preparations for winter; winter provisions flowed in from all quarters, and from the various estates was sent the due tribute in kind. This was all measured up and added to the stores of earlier years. Not for nothing had the mistress of Golovlevo had a whole series of cellars and underground compartments built; they were all filled up, but not a few of them were almost inaccessible because of the vile smells exuding from the rotten provisions. Towards the end of summer everything was inspected, and what was not fit for further preservation was condemned to be got rid of.

"The cucumbers are still good and only a bit slimy; but the estate labourers can still eat them," scolded Arina Pétrovna.

Stépane Vladimiritch made himself quite at home in his present position. Sometimes he felt an intense craving to get drunk and especially to enjoy himself in his own ways, but he controlled himself with the greatest self-restraint, as if he were saying, "My time has not yet come." He was now always

busy, because he took a part in the winter arrangements, and felt joy or pain about the fluctuating prosperity or losses in the state of the Golovlevo provisioning. He would run out of the counting-house into the cellar in a regular excitement, clad only in a coat, without a cap, hiding himself from his mother behind trees or behind the hedges bordering the clean courtyard. Arina Pétrovna did not notice him at once ; when she did, her motherly heart bade her give Stépane into safe custody ; however, after further reflection, she only threatened him with her hand, and then went on to watch with feverish impatience how the waggons were being unloaded, and everything sorted, finally disappearing in the dark depths of the cellars and basements. Stépane was in a very contented mood :

“ Ah, to-day the Dubrovino people are to bring two carts with mushrooms ; there they are ! ” He turned enraptured to the secretary, “ and I was already thinking we should have no mushrooms this winter. Bravo, Dubrovins, you’re fine fellows ! ”

“ Maminka is having carp caught in the pond to-day,” he next exclaimed. “ Ah ! what fine big ones ! They’re longer than half an arshin. So we can eat carp the whole week.” Then he again grew sorrowful :

“ The cucumbers, friend, have not turned out well this time ! They’re bent and spotty ; so I suppose we must eat last year’s.”

Arina’s household management did not please him at all.

“ How much stuff she has already let rot,” he observed to the secretary. “ It’s a shame ! To-day they examined some meat, fish and gherkins—all had to be thrown away. Is it good management ? Is it economy to let things go like that ? There she goes on continually heaping up fresh

provisions and does not touch them till rotten with age ! ”

Arina Pétrovna’s expectation that Stépane would sign the debated document without much bother came perfectly true. He not only signed without comment everything his mother sent him, but even bragged about it before the secretary, saying :

“ I have signed papers to-day, brother ; all the inheritance business is now in proper order. I have nothing more now—but she doesn’t look into the future. I’ve quieted the old woman down.”

He had parted on good terms with his brothers, and was just now in an ecstacy of joy because he possessed a whole stock of tobacco. Certainly he could not refrain from calling Porphyrius the “ Bloodsucker,” but that family nickname escaped him quite unawares in the course of conversation, and had no real significance. The brothers had been quite friendly on their departure, and had even given him money, Porphyrius accompanying his gift with the words :

“ Doubtless, you want oil for the lamp,* or you want to dedicate a taper to God. Here’s money for you, brother. Live quietly and peaceably, and maminka will be satisfied with you, whilst you are at rest, and we are all free from the torture of cares. Maminka is indeed kind, dear brother.”

“ She is kind, yes, kind,” rejoined Stépane ; “ only she feeds me with rotten salt meat.”

“ Who is to blame for that ? Who squandered away his parental inheritance ? You are that very one ; you wasted your fortune. And what a nice round fortune it was ! Had you lived more carefully and intelligently, you would be now eating roast beef and roast veal. You would have enough

* Which stood before the holy picture in the room. ;

of everything : potatoes, also cabbage and peas. Isn't it so, brother ? "

Stépane had the lucky peculiarity of not troubling over superfluous remarks. Let the other say what he pleased, he might be certain not a single one of his words was listened to. Stépane treated his brother affably, and not without a certain complacency did he show the secretary, Jacob, two twenty-five rouble notes which had remained in his hand when the brothers left.

" Now, friend," he remarked, " I have money enough for a long time. We've got tea, tobacco, and sugar, brandy alone is lacking—well, that'll come, too. But why am I staying here ? I must go to the cellar. She saw me, friend, that witch, when I was watching her near the wall. She stood at the window, looked at me, and probably remembered she had not yet checked the counting of the cucumbers."

October now invaded the country, and with it came streams of rain. The ground became boggy and impossible to walk on, and Stépane Vladimiritch could not go anywhere now, as he was wearing his father's worn-out slippers and an old costume of his. A prisoner, he sat at the window in his room and gazed through the double-window at the peasant village, which threatened to sink into the boggy earth. Men appeared like black smudges in the grey autumn mist—those who had not suffered from the severe summer-work. Work did not grow less, but increased, after the summer-time had given place to autumn melancholy. The cattle manure was smoking at midnight, the noise of the threshing-flails resounded monotonously all around. In the villages and at the office it was affirmed that the great mass of the cattle could hardly be dealt with till fastnight's week. Everything seemed dreary and sleepy, everything spoke of the op-

pressive mugginess. The counting-house door was not left as wide open as in summer, and a regular bluish mist floated about in the air, emanating from the wet, half-prepared pelts.

What impression did this picture of autumn country life make on Stépane? He was already acquainted with hard work in the boggy soil, and in pouring rain, but the grey, ever-weeping sky disquieted him. It seemed to him as if it hung directly over his head, and threatened to drown him in the opened sluices of the earth. He did nothing now, except stare through the window and watch the heavy masses of cloud. From dawn onwards the whole heavens were thickly covered with them; the clouds stood as if petrified and bewitched; hour after hour passed, but they still remained unmoved and not the least change appeared in them, either in colour or shape. Clouds, clouds, nothing but clouds, day in, day out.

It has already become quite dark in the room; in the counting-house it is still darker, there is no light yet. So what can one do but wander up and down, up and down, up and down? A morbid depression comes over one's spirits. Every being, whether working or not, experiences this inexplicable, indescribable depression. One besetting idea only constantly recurs—and that is, "the grave, the grave." Those smudges of mankind who appear round about the village are not hampered by the thought, and they are not lost beneath the burden of the oppressive air and the lowering of vital spirits. If they do not fight with the sky, they at least resist it; they build, look after things and improve them. Stépane did not become clearly conscious of this, but he had to confess that those obscure beings were by so much superior to him; that he was unable to offer resistance and had nothing to improve

and protect. He spent the evening in the office, as Arina Pétrovna did not send him a light. He several times sent a message, through the manager, begging her to send him a pair of boots and a fur-coat, but received the reply that boots were not provided for him, and he should have the winter socks as soon as the cold came. Apparently Arina Pétrovna tried to fulfil her programme literally, by keeping Stépane in such a condition that he did not actually die of hunger. At first he abused his mother, but soon he seemed to have quite forgotten her. The glitter of the light in the counting-house no longer attracted him, and he betook himself to his room so as to be alone with the darkness. There was now but one refuge for him, which, till then, he had dreaded ; which, however, drew him with irresistible power ; that was—drinking and forgetting ! A deep forgetting without awaking, a diving down into the sea of oblivion, until a return to the surface became impossible ! Everything drove him to it : the dreary past and his present idleness ; his suffering body, too, with the torturing cough ; the intolerable, irremediable tightness of chest, and the ever-increasing heart-palpitation. At last he could stand it no longer.

“ To-night, friend, we must bring in some stuff,” he once told the secretary in a tone significant of nothing good. He brought the stuff with him, and from that time on he was drunk nightly. At nine, when the light was put out in the office, and the people went off to their respective homes, he placed the brandy and a piece of black bread, strewn with salt, on the table. He did not drink the brandy in gulps ; no, he simply poured it into himself. Everything around lay in a deep sleep, only the mice gnawing in the walls and the loud beat of the office clock were audible. Without clothes, with only a shirt on his body, he roamed

about the warmly heated room ; sometimes he stopped, approached the table, sought for the brandy in the dark, and then began to roam about again. The first doses he drank, swallowing the burning fluid with voluptuous passion ; then, however, came palpitations, his head was on fire, and his speech became blurred and incoherent. This occurred night after night.

Arina did not imagine in the faintest degree how Stépane the "Booby," was spending his time in the counting-house. The sudden uprising of maternal feeling, which had taken place during the family council with Porphyrius, had left her as quickly as it had come. She did not stick to any definite way of treating Stépane, she simply forgot him. She thought no more of the being related to her by blood who was in the office, a being who was perhaps worrying to death about his means of living. Although the steward had announced several times that Stépane Vladimiritch was "not at all up to the mark," his communications had hardly touched her hearing, and had left no impression. She scarcely went out of her way even to answer in her stereotyped phrase :

"Good God ! He'll become healthy again, and survive you and me ! What's the matter with the lanky fellow ? He coughs ! Many a man coughs for thirty years, and it hurts him no more than water a goose."

Nevertheless, she was startled on being told one morning that Stépane Vladimiritch had vanished from Golovlevo. She hastily went herself through the whole house, beginning with an inspection of the room in which the lost son had lived. The first thing to cause her stupefaction was the bottle standing on the table in which there was still a little fluid ; in the haste, it had not been taken away.

"What is that?" she asked, wonder-struck.

"Perhaps he drank it," replied the steward.

"Who gave it him?" she began, but controlled her wrath and continued her examination.

The room was dirty, gloomy, and so cold from damp that even she, who did not know much about luxury and scorned the demands of comfort, began to feel unwell. The bed-covering was black with smoke, the hangings on the walls ragged and torn, the window-ledges black with a thick deposit of tobacco ash; a pillow lay on the ground, covered with thick dirt, on the bed lay a ragged linen sheet, also grey with dirt. The double frame had been taken out, or rather torn out, of one of the windows, and the window itself opened wide; the reckless man had obviously got away by that exit.

Arina Pétrovna looked out instinctively at the open country and grew yet more alarmed.

The beginning of November was indeed at hand, but autumn that year lingered unusually long and the cold had not yet started; the roads and fields were still full of murky pools and holes. How had he got away? Where could he have gone? And it now occurred to her, too, that his only articles of dress were a long coat and slippers, one of which was found under the window, and that it had rained right through the night.

She stood the whole day at the window whilst her people were searching outside in the wood, and gazed fixedly into the distance. Such a rumpus on account of that good-for-nothing! The incident seemed like a dream to her. She had wanted to send him to the Vologodsk village, and that accursed Porphyrius had dissuaded her! "Leave him in Golovlevo, maminka!" Well, this was the result! He might have lived there as he liked—and Heaven protect him! She had done her duty; one inheritance was squandered away—and yet she had

decided to give him another property. If he lost that too, he could only rage against himself. Even God supplies no provision for an insatiable man. Everything was so quiet and peaceable with us—and now? Search for him in the wood, and whistle! It'll be lucky if they bring him back to the house alive—staring with drunken eyes. He is certainly ripe for the rope. He takes a cord, winds it round a bough, places it about his neck, and it's all over. How thankful he ought to have been to his mother, and he wants to hang himself—so that's your gratitude, you charming son!

However, Arina Pétrovna's conjectures about some violent death of Stépane did not come to pass. Towards evening, a kibitka, harnessed to a pair of peasants' horses, appeared at Golovlevo, and delivered the fugitive at the counting-house. He was in a half-unconscious condition, dead beat, torn and ragged, with a bluish, swollen face. It came out that he had run in the night as far as the Dubrovino estate, which was about twenty versts from Golovlevo.

He slept thereupon a full twenty-four hours; then he woke up. As usual, he began to roam to and fro in the room; he did not touch the pipe, seeming to have forgotten it, and to any question he returned only silence. Arina Pétrovna possessed so much feeling that she gave orders at once for him to be brought out of the office into the family abode, but finally this did not seem to her advisable, so she let him be taken back to the office, with orders that his room should be cleaned, his bed-linen renewed, and curtains fastened to the windows. When she was told next day Stépane's sleep had ended, she had him in to tea with her, and even tried to adopt a friendly tone with him in their explanations.

“Where did you want to go, away from your

mother?" she began. "Do you know what dreadful anxiety you caused her? It is well papa has learnt nothing about it; how dangerous it would have been for him in his condition?"

Stépane Vladimiritch remained quite unmoved by his mother's words, and stared with a fatuous, glassy gaze at the burning tallow-candle, as if he were following its process of decay.

"You little fool, you little fool," Arina Pétrovna went on in a still more friendly tone; "d'you know what a reputation you're giving me? I have many enemies—God be with me!—and who knows what they're all chattering about me! They say I did not keep you in food and clothes—oh, you little fool, little fool!"

The same silence and the same unconscious, unintelligent staring at some fixed point.

"And how much more ill your mother has been than you! You are clothed and eat your fill—God be thanked!—you are warm and comfortable; what further could you want? You are perhaps bored; well, friend, don't be angry on that score; it is a consequence of living in the village. There are no balls and pleasure parties with us, and we all sit here in corners and bore ourselves. I am myself naturally merry and cheerful and greatly in favour of dancing and singing—but just look out at the street! In such wet one has no inclination to drive even to the Lord's house."

Arina Pétrovna was silent, expecting Stépane to make some reply. But he sat like one petrified. Her emotions began to well up in her, but she still restrained herself.

"And if you were discontented with anything, if the food perhaps was not enough, or the washing, couldn't you turn in a straightforward manner to your mother? 'Maminka, dear heart, please tell them to cook me a piece of liver **or** an omelette.'

D'you think I'd have refused ? Or, if you wanted a little drop of brandy, or well, God be with you ! a drop of rum, even two drops, it would not have discomposed me ! But it did not seem disgraceful to you to beg from the serfs, whilst it was difficult to you to speak one word to your mother."

However, all words of flattery were bootless. Stépane Vladimiritch neither felt anything (Arina Pétrovna had hoped he would kiss her hand) nor did he show any repentance ; on the contrary, he appeared to hear nothing.

Thenceforth he never spoke another word. For days and days he wandered up and down his room, with frowning forehead and trembling lips, but no feeling of weariness came over him. Sometimes he halted, as if he wanted to express something, but could not find the word ; so he had not lost the capacity for thinking ; but impressions affected his brain so slightly that they at once vanished again. In spite of all, he did not grow impatient about his want of success in finding the right word. Arina Pétrovna, for her part, was in constant terror lest he might perhaps set fire to the property.

" He does not utter a word the whole day," she said ; " he's contriving some scheme whilst he is silent. Just pay attention to my words : he will set the property on fire."

But Stépane did not think at all about anything. He assuredly feared the dark in which there was no opportunity of doing or thinking anything. His brain did probably occupy itself somehow, but not in relation to past, present, or future things. It encircled him like a black cloud from head to foot, and as he looked into the cloud, he traced out his imaginary uneasiness, and he frequently shuddered as if the cloud were going to

choke him. The whole physical and mental world lay in that enigmatic cloud.

In December of the same year, Porphyrius Vladimiritch received the following letter from his mother :

“ Early yesterday, an unexpected, God-sent ordeal befell us. My son, your brother Stépane, died. He was still in good health in the evening, and even ate a meal at that time of day ; in the morning he was found dead in bed. So quickly may our life end ! What, however, is most grievous to a mother’s heart is : He left this vain world without repentance, and exchanged it even thus for the Beyond. It may serve us all for a lesson ; he who spurns the family ties is ever bound to come to such an end. Misfortune in this world, sudden death, and eternal torments in the other world, spring from this source. For as soon as we are haughty and arrogant, and do not want to respect our parents, they also grow severe and turn our haughtiness to naught. Such are the laws which everybody must observe in this world, and the servant has to obey his master.

“ All honours have been paid the departed. I ordered a covering for the coffin from Moscow, and the Archimandrite held the Mass. The forty days’ prayers for the soul of the dead, the announcement in the church, and the offertory, follow according to the customary church use. The loss of the child pains me, but I do not venture to murmur, and I advise you also not to do so. For who may know ? Here we may be murmuring, whilst his soul is enjoying itself in Heaven.”

CHAPTER II.

FOR KINSHIP'S SAKE.

A HOT midday in July is brooding over the country. At the Dubrovino manor-house there is no sign of life; both the lazy and the energetic man are looking for some corner in the shade in which they may rest. Under the overhanging branches of a big willow, in the well-tended court-yard, lie the watch-dogs; they snap loudly at the flies so that you can hear the clutheing of their jaws. The trees stand still and motionless, as if they were exhausted. All the windows in the manor-house and in the people's dwellings are wide open. The heat pours out in glowing waves; the soil, covered with short, burnt grass, is laden with dust; an intolerable glitter hovers over the neighbourhood, so that you are hardly able to fix your eyes on anything. The manor-house, which is usually grey of hue but now glistens like silver, the garden hedge in front of it, the birch wood which is separated from the house by a path, the pond and the peasant village, as well as the corn field which stands behind the common—all is resting under the shining mist. A blending of smells, from the blooming limes as well as from the dung-hill over the way, fills the leaden air. No sound can be heard; perhaps you may possibly hear the clattering of kitchen knives in the kitchen, beeause the soup for the noonday meal is being prepared there.

Inside the house, however, noiseless disquiet holds sway. The old mistress and two young girls are sitting in the dining-room. They do not touch the embroidery lying on the table, but sit as if petrified whilst waiting. In the maid's room two women-servants are engaged in the preparation of poultices and mustard plasters, and the light sound of the spoons is heard through the reigning stillness. Two bare-footed maids move about busily in the passage, flitting to and fro from the entresol to the maids' room. Sometimes there is an exclamation : "Where's the mustard grains ? Have you gone to sleep ?" And a servant rushes out of the room. Finally, the noise of heavy steps becomes audible on the stairs. He is a tall, broad-shouldered man, with fresh cheeks which are the picture of health. The tone of his voice is clear, his walk firm, the eyes look bright and friendly, and the mouth is full and fresh. He is a man of the world, in the full sense of the word, who, despite his fifty years, is not usually behindhand at a drinking bout or banquet. He wears a summer suit ; he shows off, rather like a dandy, a white piqué vest, decorated with glittering buttons adorned with arms ; as he enters he makes a clicking sound with his tongue.

"Heh, girls ! bring me something to drink and a trifle to eat with it !" he cries, turning to the door leading to the passage.

"Well, how is it going ?" the old lady asks, uneasily.

"God is boundlessly good, Arina Pétrovna," answers the doctor.

"What does that mean ? Is there perhaps——?"

"Yes ; he may possibly drag along one or two days, but then——"

The doctor made a significant gesture with his hand and went on in a low voice: "He's continually turning somersaults, one after the other."

"How's that? Why, the doctors had cured him—and suddenly——"

"What sort of doctors?"

"Our country doctor and the town doctor were here."

"If you'd called me in a month earlier, he would have lived."

"So there's nothing more to be done?"

"God's goodness is infinite; I can't say more."

"Perhaps that will have an effect?"

"What?"

"Well, what we have there—a mustard plaster."

"Perhaps."

A woman in a black dress and cloak brought in a salver, on which stood a bottle of brandy and two plates with sausage and caviar.

The doctor helps himself, holds the spirits to the light, and smacks with his tongue.

"Your health, honoured lady!" he cries, turning to Arina Pétrovna.

"Your health, dear sir!"

"Through this, Paul Vladimiritch has to pass away in the prime of his years, through this brandy!" says the doctor, comfortably clicking his tongue and spitting a piece of sausage on the fork.

"Yes, how many have already been killed by it? Not everybody can stand this fluid; but as it agrees well with us, we shall take yet a drop more! Your health, lady!"

"Eat, eat; it certainly doesn't hurt you."

"It does not. I have flawless lungs, liver, kidneys, and spleen. Heh, there!" he turned to the black-robed woman who stood at the door as if she wanted to listen to her superiors' talk, "what is there for dinner to-day?"

"Soup with cold meat, roast sucking-pig, and cutlets," she answered with a somewhat sour smile.

"Have you also got smoked fish?"

"Why shouldn't there be fish, master? We have Sevruga sturgeon."

"Well, let us put up with cold meat and sturgeon for luneh. Very tender, you know, and fat. Is not your name Ulitushka?"

"People call me Ulita, master."

"Well, then, hurry up, Ulita."

Ulitushka departs, and deep silence prevails for a few minutes. Arina Pétrovna rises from her seat, and looks towards the door by which Ulitushka had just departed.

"Did you mention the orphans to him, Andreas Oxpich?" she asks the doctor.

"Assuredly."

"Well?"

"Things are as before. 'As soon as I am well again,' he says, 'I'll go to confession and write out a bill of exchange.'"

There is a still deeper silence now among the company. The girls take their embroideries from the table and draw thread upon thread with praiseworthy zeal. Arina Pétrovna sighs despairingly, whilst the doctor roams about the room and mutters, "a somersault."

"And you explained it to him thoroughly?"

"I couldn't have done better. I said to him: 'If you don't remember the orphans you are a contemptible fellow.' Yes, respected mamma, you made a mistake. Had you called me in a month earlier I could still have brought him round; but everything is now left to Porphyrius as the rightful heir. No doubt about that."

"Mamma, what's going to happen?" wailed the elder of the two girls in tears. "What will uncle do with us?"

"I don't know, dear child, I don't know his plans. To-day, you are here, to-morrow—I don't

know. Perhaps God will give us shelter in some shed or with a peasant in his hut."

"God! What a simpleton that uncle is!" exclaims the elder girl.

"You, young person, must keep your mouth shut," observed the doctor, and turning to Arina Pétrovna, added: "You, yourself, most respected mamma, ought just to try your luck with him."

"No, no, no. He will not. He does not like to see me at all. I recently went to him and he asked that I should at least bring him the last travelling expenses for food."

"Perhaps Ulitushka may be more successful. She might prepare him for your visit."

"That creature tells the 'Bloodsucker' everything. People say that his horses are always ready to drive him here when his brother is dying. And, just think! she even drew up recently a list of all the furniture, ornaments, apparatus of all kinds, so that everything may be here in the house at the suitable moment. She wants to brand us as thieves."

"I suppose you're not on friendly terms with her—"

The doctor was interrupted by a breathless servant rushing in, crying out in a frightened voice:

"Help for the master! The master wants the doctor!"

* * * * *

The family described in the foregoing scene is already known to us. There is Arina Pétrovna, the former mistress of the Dubrovino estate; her son, Paul Vladimiritch, and lastly, Anninka and Lubinka, daughters of the deceased Anna Vladimirovna, to whom also Arina had once thrown a

piece of property. Ten years have passed since the beginning of our story, but the relations between the characters have so altered that there is no longer the slightest trace of the artificial bonds by means of which the Gollovlev family had shown itself in a kind of impregnable position. That stability, upheld by Arina Pétrovna's untiring hands, decayed, but decayed so imperceptibly that Arina, without noticing it herself, co-operated in the falling-off, yes, even helped the fall; its real originator was, of course, Porphyrius "the Bloodsucker."

From a pugnacious Lady of Golovlevo possessed of boundless powers, Arina Pétrovna had become a quiet manageress in her youngest son's house, having no longer the least influence in the settling of domestic affairs. Her head had become bowed, her back bent, her eyes dulled, and her gait tottering.

In order at any rate to have something to do, the old woman was now occupied with some embroidery, but she was not exactly enthusiastic about her work, for her thoughts were always far from the present. She sits for a time and works—but her hands suddenly rest, her head sinks back on the seat and she begins to dream. She dreams and dreams; and the old woman's dreariness hovers around her whole being. At times she gets up, and begins a round through the rooms, she searches with her eyes and looks like a woman who has carried the keys of the house her whole life and cannot understand how and when she has lost them.

The first blow to Arina Pétrovna's autocracy was not so much the abolition of serfdom as the period preceding it.

At first there were merely rumours, but then came the meetings of the nobility, with their addresses to the Tsar, the Government Committees, and the Revision Commissions, which frightened and dis-

quieted her. Arina Pétrovna's imagination, ever lively and vivid, mirrored to her a number of stupidities. She at once put to herself the question : "How shall I call for Agashka by name ? Agafya perhaps ? Or must she be named Agafya Theodorovna ?" On another occasion she comes into the house : it is empty, because the people have assembled to eat in the servants' room ; she accidentally glances into the cellar and sees Julka and Thioshka there with their mouths full to bursting. She would much have liked to scold them—but she turns round and goes away. "What could I dare say to them now ? They are free, they no longer have their own master and a judge."

However insignificant such small details are, yet a certain constraint is often their effect, a constraint which influences the whole being and whose accumulated force is capable of crippling it. Arina Pétrovna had suddenly lost the reins of power, and after two years she did nothing but exclaim from morning till evening :

"That's the case now ! There's no longer a master ; everybody's as good as everybody else ! Heaven has no longer any light nor the devil an oven-fork."

Vladimir Mikhaïlovitch died about that period of the Committee's operations ; he passed away quietly and peaceably, after renouncing Barkoff and his works. His last words ran : "Lord, I thank Thee, that Thou dost not let me appear before Thee among a body of serfs."

His words exercised deep influence on Arina Pétrovna's mind, and her husband's death, taken in combination with her fantastic pictures of the future, threw a curious light on life in Golovlevo. It was as if the old house of Golovlevo and all that lived in it wished suddenly also to die.

Porphyrius Vladimiritch, with his keen powers

of perception, saw from the expressions of pain, which were the undercurrent in Arina Pétrovna's letters, in what bewilderment his mother's mind was enveloped. Arina Pétrovna no longer declared and instructed in her letters, but trusted only to God's help, "which in our time of small faith does not abandon even the serfs, much less those who, with their services, were a hopeful prop of the Church and its ornaments." Porphyrius divined that if maminka began to rely on God, it must mean that she was suffering from a certain exhaustion, and he utilised it with the cunning and cleverness peculiar to him.

Directly after the completion of the emancipation of the serfs he appeared unexpectedly in Golovlevo, and found Arina Pétrovna quite exhausted and sorrowful.

"Well? What's the talk in Petersburg?" was her first question after the usual greeting.

Porphyrius drew a very long face and was silent.

"No, you ought to put yourself in my place," she went on, after observing that her son's silence was not very auspicious. "I have now thirty girls sitting in the servants' room—what shall I do with them? Shall they go on living here at my cost? How shall I keep them? We have quite enough cabbage, potatoes, and bread, but should you want potatoes or cabbage cooked, there's a murmur, 'Oh, those potatoes!' 'Oh, the cabbage!' I suppose, finally, I shall have actually to go personally into the bazaar and buy in myself with my money."

Porphyrius looked his dear mother in the eyes and smiled sadly with an expression of sympathy.

"Shall I dismiss them to the four quarters of the world? Shall I say, 'Go, you dear ones, and keep your eyes open!' I don't know; I can't judge what's going to come of it all."

Porphyrius smiled, as if "What's going to come of it all?" seemed very funny to him.

"Don't laugh, my son! The matter is serious enough, and I tell you if this continues I shan't be able to keep anything for myself; I must indeed look out for myself now. But what's to be done? What shall I do without the servants? I can't carry on a house by myself; that is not possible, my son!"

"God is kind, maminka!"

"Yes, but he isn't just now, child! We were good—and He was a kind Master to us; we did wrong, and we implored Him not to be wrathful with us. I now think one should not put everything down on the good side! So it is; and I shall have a small peasant's hut built near papa's grave, in order to live and die there."

Porphyrius Vladimiritch pricked his ears; his mouth filled with water.

"But who shall manage the property?" he rejoined, with the gesture of one casting a line.

"Don't worry! You'll do it. Thanks be to God, there's enough there. I can no longer carry it on alone."

Arina was silent and her head drooped. The "Bloodsucker's" eye was directed upon her with a piercing expression, it was as if a light shone out of his face.

"And why shouldn't you have considered how to shove me a little aside?" she remarked dryly.

"Is it still early enough, my darling?"

For the first time a question of Arina's remained unanswered.

There are conversations which, once broached, do not admit of any intermission. Some hours later Arina Pétrovna returned again to the interrupted conversation.

"I shall go to the church of the Holy Trinity—then order my affairs, purchase a little house in some remote spot—and live there for the rest of my days."

Porphyrius Vladimiritch still maintained silence.

"Last year, when my late husband was still alive," continued Arina Pétrovna, "I was sitting alone in my bedroom when suddenly it seemed that a voice whispered in my ear: 'Betake yourself to some miracle worker, to some miracle worker,' and thrice the voice spoke thus. I paid no attention at first, and then it occurred to me it must have been a vision intended for me. If it pleased God, then I was ready. Scarcely had I thought thus when a wonderfully pleasing odour filled the room. In the evening I was on my journey."

The tears started to Arina's eyes, and Porphyrius utilised the moment by kissing maminka's hand, nay, he even put his arm round her waist.

"Yes," he said, "it is so beautiful to live in peace with one's God——"

"Listen, now. I have not said all yet! I set out in the evening and went straightway—to the holy man. With him there is at night a constant service of God; singing, burning of candles, and an agreeable odour everywhere; I did not know whether I was in heaven or on earth. From this service I went to the monk, Jonas, and said to him: 'Are you full in the temple to-day?' He answered, 'Certainly, madame! Father Habaguk had a vision while at devotions. He had scarcely raised his hands in prayer when he perceived a light in the cupola and a dove looking at him. From that time I made up my mind, however long I might live, to spend the rest of my days with the Holy Trinity.'

"But who will care for us, for your children? Oh, maminka!"

"Come now, you are no longer a minor, and can well get along by yourself! As for me, I shall go with the two children of Anna to the miracle-worker, and secure a dwelling with him. Perhaps one of the girls will express a wish to devote herself to the service of God. I shall purchase a small house, prepare a kitchen garden with potatoes—and that will satisfy me."

Several times during the ensuing days, Arina made significant proposals, retracted, and then renewed them again.

Finally, she could no longer escape, and six months after the last visit of Porphyrius the state of things was that Arina had not repaired to the holy place, and had bought no little house by the tomb of her husband, but had divided her estate, reserving to herself only a portion of the capital. Porphyrius received the larger share of the inheritance, Paul the residue.

* * * * *

Arina Pétrovna remained as heretofore in Golovlevo. Porphyrius shed tears and implored his dear maminka to administer his estate without troubling about accounts, and to take the revenues. Paul, on the other hand, coldly thanked his mother, and betook himself thence to take up his abode in Dubrovino.

From this time a kind of infatuation came over Arina. The inner nature of Porphyrius became a sealed book to her. It was as if she still lived on Golovlevo, and was accountable to no one. Yonder lived her other son—but what a difference! Unlike Porphyrius, Paul had asked of his mother no advice whatever. Porphyrius did not need to ask her for anything, for she anticipated all his wishes. But some unpleasantness arose over a piece

of strange land that projected into the Golovlevo property. It was desirable either to buy it or leave it. But to all Arina's proposals, Porphyrius only returned the answer :

" I am quite satisfied, dearest maminka, with what you have in your kindness given me."

These answers angered Arina. She began to lose completely any accurate comprehension of her peculiar and special relations to Golovlevo. The old fever of lucre waxed with renewed strength in her being—but for the sake of her sons, though not for her own, she conquered the passion.

And the inheritance grew and flourished.

When the time came that Arina's own capital had diminished to such an extent that she could hardly live on the interest, Porphyrius sent her a whole packet of forms to be used for rendering accounts in the future. For postscript was the remark :

" For use in case the profit of the year in which the account is taken should turn out to be less than that of the previous year, whether by reason of dryness, rain, and so forth."

Arina sighed. But soon she began to understand only too well that these formalities were nothing less than the machinery by which she had bound herself hand and foot. After an interchange of heated correspondence, Arina, ill and irritable, migrated to Dubrovino, where Porphyrius came on leave of absence.

There followed many troubrous days for the old woman. Paul Vladimiritch was extremely disagreeable. He only took her and the two orphans on condition that she never came into his entresol and did not mix herself up in his household affairs. The latter condition especially agitated Arina. Two people kept house for Paul : Ulitushka, a serpent-like chambermaid, who was

charged with the confidential correspondence with Porphyrius, and the quondam valet of the dead master, Kyriushka, who, in spite of his entire ignorance of agriculture, daily read his master lectures on the subject. Both pilfered without mercy. How often Arina had resolved to open her son's eyes to the state of his tea, sugar, and butter. Great quantities came in, but Ulitushka, not troubling about the old lady's presence, calmly filled her pockets with handfuls of sugar before her very eyes. When she did open her mouth to say something, her son merely answered :

" Only one can rule in the house. You are very clever, very sensible—but the Bloodsucker has not left a corner for you."

And then Arina made an awful discovery. Paul drank ! The passion had stolen insidiously on him, thanks to his rural solitude, and had made such progress that it could lead to only one inevitable end.

When Arina first came to the house, Paul was retiring. Her first impression on noticing how thick his voice had become, was that his weakness was the cause of it. She did not relish a conversation with him, for he was always grumbling. Either it had not rained for weeks on end, or else it had suddenly come down in torrents. All this appeared to be a constant source of dissatisfaction. Coming one day from the entresol, he sat opposite her and began :

" The sky is overcast. Porphyrius had rain yesterday—but we get none ! The clouds go by and hardly a drop falls."

On another occasion it would be this :

" There, now, it's simply pouring ! The rye is hardly up, and now it's almost soaked ! Porphyrius long ago gathered in everything from his fields. Now we shall have only rotten fodder for the cattle."

Arina kept silent through this chatter, except that once she lost her patience and remarked :

“ Perhaps you keep your hands in your pockets too much ? ”

She did not think it advisable to add that Paul began to grow ever paler in the face.

Occasionally he became so inflamed that he vexed his soul over his entire property.

“ And why must I be burdened with this Dubrovino ? What do I get out of it ? ”

“ What do you get out of Dubrovino ? It is a splendid estate ! ”

“ In our times, immovable property is unnecessary ! Money’s the principal thing ! You can take money, stick it in your pocket, and bring it out when you want it ! ”

The more dipsomania got the upper hand of Paul Vladimiritch the more quixotic became his conversation. Then Arina noticed things going wrong with his attire. One morning she found, in a small cupboard in the dining-room, a decanter full of brandy—by midday there was not a drop left. On another occasion she happened to be sitting in the drawing-room when she heard a peculiar noise coming from the dining-room ; she went in, and from the vicinity of the well-known cupboard heard cautious steps quickly disappearing in the direction of the entresol.

“ The master was drinking, was he not ? ” she asked Ulitushka.

“ He is working,” answered the latter with a malicious smile.

Convinced that his mother had found him out, Paul ceased to make any secret about it. One morning the cupboard disappeared from the dining-room, and when Arina asked what had become of it, Ulitushka answered :

“ Orders were given to take it into the

entresol, where it can be more easily made use of."

Indeed, decanters followed one another into the entresol with tireless rapidity. Living thus in solitude, Paul hated human companionship, and began to develop quite a phantastic world for himself. A regular heroic romance figured in it, in which he and the vampire played the leading parts. He could not even bring himself to say how deep-rooted was his hate for Porphyrius, how incessantly all his thoughts and whole being were filled with this hatred. Like a bodily presence, the accursed image stood before him ; he heard that voice choke with simulated tears—its empty chatter, which rang with a burning distrust of every blood-relation and yet knew so well how to dissemble that distrust. Paul drank and reflected. He recalled all the insults he had had to endure merely through the sway which the Bloodsucker enjoyed in the house.

Paul hated his brother, but he feared him, too. He knew that glistening light in his glance, his voice which crept like a serpent in the soul of a man, and all imperceptibly undermined his will-power. He could not determine ever to cross swords with him. Now and then the Bloodsucker came to Dubrovino to kiss dear maminka's hand—he had indeed hunted dear mama out of the house, but that had done no injury to his filial reverence—and so Paul had shut himself up in the entresol, and sat by the closed door so long as the hated one was with their mother.

And so matters went on from day to day until at length Paul found himself staring Death in the face.



The doctor stayed overnight for form's sake, at

Dubrovino, and then, early on the following morning, went back to the town. On departing, he said frankly that the patient would not live a couple of days longer.

Arina Pétrovna wandered about the whole morning as if in a dream. She tried to pray—ought not God to hearken to her? But no prayer came to her mind, and speech forsook her. She began : “Have mercy, O Lord, in Thy great goodness,” and subconsciously added, “Save us from the Bloodsucker.” “As Thou will it. As Thou will it,” she murmured mechanically, but her thoughts would keep straying ; now she fancies herself in the entresol, now in the cellar, and then in her mind’s eye she conjures up a new picture. It is dawn, and in the dawn many people are gathered together ; they press on in a throng, struggle, and drag their way along with difficulty. “The master is dead.” Incense fumes hover in the air ; “Almighty God, come to my aid, come to my aid !” Her voice is struck dumb, her eyes stare fixedly without consciousness, on the holy picture ; her mouth is wide open, and her hands lie limp in her lap, and she sits, immovable, like a statue.

At last she breaks out into whimpering. The tears run from her fading eyes down the withered cheeks, clinging to the deep furrows of her wrinkles, and then out again on to the soiled collar of her calico blouse. And in that picture how much of bitterness was there, how much utter hopelessness and futile striving! Old age and necessity, the helplessness of her condition—all this seemed to beckon her to death, to the one and only avenue of escape to Peace. Yet at the same time she recalled the past, and all her independence, her contentment, her wealth, and this reflection grew so strong in her that it almost drew her to the earth. “Die I must !” the words whirled through her

brain, only a moment later to give way to the echo, "No, I must live on!" She thought neither of Porphyrius nor of her dying son—both, so far as she was concerned, had ceased to exist. She thought no longer of them; nor troubled about whom she was angry with, or against whom she had to bring accusations; she had even forgotten whether she still possessed any property, and whether it was sufficient to secure her against the perils of old age. Restlessness, a deadly restlessness, had taken mastery of her whole being.

"How sadly things are with me; it is too bitter!" These were the only words that accompanied her tears. For a long time she wept these tears; drop after drop they had come from the moment she left Golovlevo to live in Dubrovino. She had foreseen and was prepared for everything as it now stood, but could not bring herself to realise that such an end would in fact follow her expectation and foreboding. And now this end had come, an end full of tragedy and cheerless solitude. Her whole life through she had sacrificed herself, and now it appeared that she had merely sacrificed herself to a deception. At all times "family" had figured as the first word in the language; in the name of the family she had punished here, and rewarded there; she had deprived and stinted herself, had lived her whole life for the family—and now it was becoming clear to her that she had no family!

She sat down and leant on her arm, turning her tear-bathed face to the rising sun as if to say, "Do you see me?" She did not sigh, she did not utter maledictions; she only uttered halting words, swallowing the tears as she spoke. In her soul burnt the one thought: "No one have I on earth, no one and nothing, nothing, nothing!"

Then the tears stopped, she wiped her face, and

wandered aimlessly round the dining-room, where, however, the girls bombarded her with complaints :

" What will become of us, now, mama ? We shall be entirely without an estate ? " said Lubinka, wrangling with her.

Towards midday Arina decided to go to her dying son. Cautiously she approached his door. In the entresol thick darkness prevailed. Hardly a glimmer of light filtered through the green window curtains.

There were really two rooms here ; in one of these Ulitushka was standing, cleaning gooseberries and chasing away the flies, which hung round the gooseberry wine in thick clouds, or perched insolently on people's noses and mouths. Through the half-open door of the room near by could be heard a low short cough, broken from time to time with a distressing fit of expectoration.

" You can leave the room, my good child," said Arina, turning to Ulitushka.

" What news is there, then ? " asked the girl.

" I want to speak with Paul Vladimiritch. Go ! "

" Excuse me, mistress, how can I go away ? Suppose something happened all of a sudden, and I was wanted——? "

" Who's there ? " came a weak voice from within.

" Order Ulita to go away, dear son. I must speak with you."

Arina exhibited so much firmness in that moment that she conquered. Crossing herself, she entered the room. The sick man lay on his back smoking, almost unconsciously, a cigarette. His hands had become so thin and weak that all the bones showed, his head had sunk exhausted on the cushion, and his face, like his body, burned with a dry heat. His eyes blazed up large and glowing, as if looking for something ; his nose was long and pointed, and

his mouth hung half agape. He was not coughing, but smoking and smoking, with such vigour that it seemed as if all his vital force had become concentrated in his breast for that purpose.

"How do you feel to-day?" asked Arina, sitting down in an easy chair at his feet.

"Not great—this morning—when was the doctor here?"

"To-day."

"Now, he thinks—this morning——"

The patient appeared to be struggling to find a word.

Both were silent for a while. Arina wanted to speak, but had to prepare what she intended to say.

"Is Porphyrius well?" at last asked the sick man.

"Why should we talk about him! He may be alive or not!"

"He is no doubt thinking: 'My brother Paul is dying—but with God's help, my property still belongs to me——'"

"We all die some time, and our goods pass into other hands, to our heirs——"

"But not to the Bloodsucker!"

"You ought to take into consideration, dear son, that there are two orphaned nieces.—What property have they? What did their mother have?"

"They want to know why everything has gone to Porphyrius?"

"Why not, indeed! I know I'm to blame. . . . I thought I had a son, and with you could I not well, as a mother, have thought that was so?"

There ensued silence.

"What do you see, my son?"

"That you take me for a fool? Well, I will remain one!—You come and torment me!"

"I do not want to harass you; but—a limit is assigned to every mortal's existence!"

Arina sank her head and was silent. She knew her undertaking was doomed to failure.

"I don't know why you hate me," she said at length.

"Absolutely, no—I, you—no—we have only balanced accounts."

"It is possible that I have been wanting; forgive it now! For Jesus' sake! You think, perhaps, that I desire your death? Reassure yourself, my son!—I am well and warm living here with you, and if you seek my motherly heart, you will find it!"

Paul lay motionless and coughed gently.

"One can transfer one's capital in one's lifetime," Arina continued, staring at her hand.

Paul moved gently. She did not observe him.

"The capital, my son, passes with the possession of the estate. All hangs on the vital question—to whom will he decree what is his own to give?"

Paul burst suddenly into an ugly laugh.

"I don't properly understand you! You have always treated me as a fool before the world—now as I am a fool, I will remain so. Just see, now, what you imagine—that I ought to give you my capital! What shall I do then? Go into a monastery? That is what you will tell me to do, so that from its sanctuary I can watch you living on my money!"

He called these words out with great precipitateness, angrily and excitedly, with the result that he completely exhausted his strength. A quarter of an hour later he was coughing again with such great violence that one would have marvelled whence the pitiable human skeleton derived so much power. Then he breathed deeply and closed his eyes.

Arina Pétrovna looked round about her in despair. There was nothing more to be hoped for; she had fully convinced herself that every new attempt to urge the dying man to something could only serve to bring nearer the day of Porphyrius' future. Already in her mind's eye she could see the latter, as he accompanies her to the grave to perform the funeral obsequies of his late brother ; two tears flow from his eyes. Now they are letting the coffin down into the earth : "Pardon, brother," he cries out, distorting his lips, and with his staring eyes endeavouring to give to his voice a note of pain. And now the funeral repast is over, and Porphyrius still sits there with the priest, dilating zealously on the benevolence of the dear departed, and finding in his listener full confirmation of his eulogies.

"Oh, brother, why did you not wish to stay longer with us!" he calls out, rising from the table and extending his hand under the holy man's benediction. At last, God be praised, they finish eating, and go to sleep till midday. But Porphyrius wanders into the apartments of the house, noting everything, looking at everything.

All these ineffaceable pictures of the future rose up before Arina's eyes, and in her ears boomed, with almost life-like distinctness, the voice of Porphyrius, saying, as he turns to her, "You remember, maminka, brother had some golden shirt buttons ; they were very fine, and he only wore them on solemn occasions—where can he have laid them—I can't find them."

* * * *

Arina did not hurry down when, from the height on which the church of Dubrovino stood, a caliche with four horses made its appearance. On the

principal seat was Porphyrius, with bared head, for he had just crossed himself in front of the church. Opposite him sat his two sons, Peter and Vladimir. "The old fox scents booty," whispered a voice in Arina's ear. The girls showed their anxiety, and clung tenaciously to their grandmother. In the house the habitual calm was giving place to a general stir. Doors were slammed, footsteps sounded everywhere, and people kept saying: "The master is coming, the master is coming." Everything that had lived in the place was now crowded into one wing. Some crossed themselves, others stood in calmly expectant attitudes; but all knew perfectly well that the relations which hitherto had subsisted at Dubrovino were only of a transitory nature, and that now, with the true master at the head, all that would be changed. Many old servants, who, with their former master had enjoyed a monthly allowance for necessaries, and many who had possessed their own soil and lived as "free" people were now, very naturally, asking one another whether the "new" master would continue the old arrangements or alter everything according to the Golovlevo standard?

Porphyrius did not hurry to alight from the caliche; he beckoned to a couple of servants, who at once rushed up to him. Slowly he mounted the steps, his lips murmuring a prayer as he went. His countenance expressed nothing but the deepest grief and pain. He spoke of "Fate," but trusted above all in the Will of God. His sons walked side by side behind him. Vladimir mimicked his father—folded his hands, rolled his eyes, and moved his lips, while Peter derived much amusement from his brother's pantomime. Behind them followed, in a great crowd, the people from the estate.

Porphyrius kissed Arina's hand, then her mouth, and then her hand again ; then, embracing her, he said, dolefully shaking his head :

" But you have quite lost all your heart ! That's not right, dearest maminka ! You ought to have asked : ' What will God say to that ? ' He says : ' I am the Lord, and in My wisdom will do all for the best ! ' " Thereupon he kissed his two nieces, saying, in a soft, consoling voice : " And you, girls, in tears ? Come, smile a little—and, lo, the pain disappears."

" Behold me," he continued, " as brother, I bear the greatest pain, but perhaps I have not wept once. To weep is as much as to say that God does not know better than we what His intentions towards us are. Reflect on that, and take new courage. You, too, maminka ; all of you." He turned to the servants. " Look at me, how I still retain the vigour of youth."

And he converted himself into a " young fellow " by pulling himself up erect, planting one foot boldly in front of the other, and throwing his head back. Everybody was forced to laugh, but it was a constrained laugh, for each said to himself : " The spider has come to weave his web."

After this performance, Porphyrius repaired to the reception room, and once more kissed his mother's hand. He referred to his late brother's attitude towards him :

" At such a time as this," said Arina, " one must completely forget that, and not rake up old quarrels."

" I have long ago forgotten, maminka. But often did I come to him, often, and in roundabout way, lovingly and in brotherly fashion—but he kept me at arm's length from him. And now God has taken him—"

" Strive to think no more about it. Already the scent of the incense is in the air."

"Yes, maminka, death is a sublime mystery. One does not know from this day to that—perhaps one has made all manner of plans, and is so exalted that none can touch him. But God can shatter all dreams in a trice. You may hide your sins before the world, but they are all known and registered in the book of life. Nothing, dear mama, can be erased from that book."

"We must repent."

"Yes, I know, for the sake of Paul's soul ! He did not love me, but I desire it. God afflicted him, not I, with sickness. Does he suffer much, mama ? "

"Not so much.—The doctor was here, and even gave some hope," lied Arina Pétrovna.

"Come now, that's good. While we are standing here, murmuring against the All-Highest, Paul is perhaps sitting in bed again and thanking God for his recovery."

This reflection so pleased the Bloodsucker that he laughed softly.

During all this time the agitation of Paul Vladimiritch was indescribable. He lay completely deserted in the entresol, and heard the unaccustomed hustle that suddenly disturbed the serenity of the house.

The throwing open of doors, the footsteps along the passages, were a terrible riddle to him. He called out as loudly as he could, but becoming convinced that his summons was dying away unheard, he mustered all his strength, raised himself up in the bed, and listened. A deep stillness now suddenly reigned in place of the hasty running to and fro and hum of voices. Something uncanny, something mysterious, began to assail him from all sides. The daylight stole with difficulty through the drawn curtains, and although in the corner of the room a lamp burned in front of the

holy image, the darkness which filled the apartment seemed only the deeper and more oppressive. His eye stared into the dismal corners of the room, and for the first time something indefinable in the darkness troubled him. The holy image, with its golden bordering, on which the rays of the lamp-light were mirrored so sharply that the image seemed endowed with life, stood out from the darkness in significant relief. On the ceiling of the room trembled a shining circle, now glowing stronger, now fading, according as the light of the holy lamp flickered up or waned. On the wall, near the holy image, hung a garment over which streaks of light and shadow passed, giving it the appearance of a moving object. Paul looked and looked again, and it was becoming apparent to him that there was a sudden movement in that corner of the room. Solitude, helplessness, deathly stillness—and with it all, the shadow—a whole row of shadows ! They seemed to pass away, and to pass again and again ! In an indescribable fit of terror, his mouth gaping wide open, he stares into the frightful corner ; not a cry does he utter, only a deep groan. He groans so loud and deep that he seems to be baying like a dog. But he does not hear a creaking on the stairs, a cautious shuffling tread in the next room—suddenly a hateful form appears before his bed, that of the Bloodsucker. It glimmers before his eyes, as if it were being evolved out of the darkness, which just previously had moved with such infinite mystery—shadows on shadows ceaselessly pass.

" Wherefore ? Whence ? Who sends them ? " shrieks Paul, half-conscious and sinking back on his pillow exhausted.

Porphyrius stands at the bedside ; he gazes at the sick man and mournfully shakes his head.

" You are ill ? " he asks, lending to his voice

that degree of mildness and tenderness which was ever at his command.

Paul was silent and raised an imploring look towards his brother as if striving to understand him.

But Porphyrius has already betaken himself to the holy image, before which he falls down on his knees, crosses himself, makes three low bows, and then rising again, comes back to the bedside.

“Now, dear brother, stand up ; God has given you grace !” he says, seating himself in the easy chair, and in such a pious tone of voice that one might have imagined he had brought the divine grace with him in his pocket.

Paul now had a deep conviction that it was no shadow before him, but the Bloodsucker in flesh and blood. His hair stood on end as if it were stiffening. His brother’s eyes glowed clear and hospitably on his nearest relation, but the patient knew that in those eyes lurked a snare which at any moment could entrap him.

“Ah, brother of my heart, why are you putting yourself about so !” continues Porphyrius, joking in the ardour of his fraternal affection. “Come, be of good cheer ! Stand up and walk ! Oh, faint-hearted one !”

“Go away, Bloodsucker,” cried the sick man in the rage of despair.

“Ah, dearest brother ! I want to amuse you, to console you, and you—what are you saying ? What a sin ! How come such words from you, friend, who are my dear brother ? That is hateful, my dear, very hateful ! But wait a moment, while I arrange your pillow for you——”

Porphyrius shoves his hand underneath the pillow.

“See now ; so !” he continues ; “now that’s more comfortable for you ; now you can lie more

pleasantly and won't have to give orders about it to-morrow."

"Go—you—"

"Oh, dear, how harshly illness has treated you. Your nature has become rougher—and how very much so, too! 'Go and go,'—yes, indeed; how should I go? If you would only have a little something to drink! I can reach you a mouthful; if the lamp does not work properly I can put it right again and pour some olive oil upon it! You lie down while I sit here; be still and peaceful, and then we shall see how the time passes!"

"Away, Bloodsucker, away—"

"You scold me, but I will pray to God for you."

"Judas, the betrayer! He has driven his own mother out of her home to a peasant's hovel."

"I say again, spurn me as you will; but don't speak now of that business! Even if I were no Christian, yet I would ask that of you!"

"He has hunted her away, yes, hunted her away!—hunted a mother away for the sake of her property!"

"Come, now, cease! I will pray to God; perhaps you will then grow a little calmer."

However much Porphyrius had succeeded in restraining himself, the abuse of the dying man had so agitated him that his lips trembled, and the blood fled from them. But hypocrisy was so strongly developed a quality in him that he was not capable of desisting from the comedy he had begun to play. Suiting action to word, he fell down on his knees and, raising his hands in prayer, remained in that attitude for a quarter of an hour. At the end of his devotions he turned again towards his brother's bed with a tranquil, nay, almost jovial, expression.

"Dear brother," he began, settling himself in the easy-chair once more, "I have come to you

especially to talk over a particular matter. You scold me, indeed, but I am greatly concerned about your spiritual welfare. Tell me, when did you last partake of the Lord's Supper?"

"Lord, take him—take him out! Ulitushka, Agashka! Where on earth are they?" groaned the patient.

"Now, now, calm yourself, dear brother. I know you do not like to speak about this. You were ever a bad Christian, and still are so. But it would certainly not be an inopportune moment to think now of the health of your soul. Our souls—ah, how circumspect we ought all to be when concerned with our spiritual well-being. What does the Church teach us: 'That the end of a Christian ought to be free from illness or grief, and full of peace.'

Paul lay there, his face livid; he could hardly breathe. Had he at that moment had the physical power to smash his own skull he would have done so.

"Have you given orders with regard to your property?" continued the Bloodsucker; "it is a beautiful estate. The land is even better than that of Golovlevo. And then, again, I know you have also some money. I know, too, that you have always allowed your peasants to purchase their freedom, but at what price—that is of no interest to me. I have come to you, saying to myself, brother Paul possesses money; and if that is so, he must have decided on the manner of its disposition."

The sick man breathed with difficulty.

"Have you not done so? All the better! The law can all the more simply be complied with. Of course, it does not belong to strangers, but to relatives. I, myself, am infirm, and have one foot in the grave, and hence I think you can bequeath the money to me, as soon as the law adjudicates it

to me—no quarrelling, no conditions—just a plain legal decree."

It was frightful. Paul felt as if he were alive in his grave, in a lethargic slumber. He could not stir a limb, and could hear nothing but the mockery of the Bloodsucker over his body.

"Go, for Christ's sake, go," he began, entreating his tormentor.

"Calm yourself! I'll go presently. It is sad, very sad, not to love your own brother. So you have made no disposition of your property? Fine, my cherished one. Many people, especially those without a family, conceal their money—so now we will look around. But, come, what is this! Have I upset you? Well, well, I am going away now. But, first, I will pray once more."

And he knelt down and raised his hands upwards.

"Pardon, brother! Rest in peace; perhaps God will pardon you!—but above all do not get excited—sleep and keep quite calm."

"Bloodsucker!" echoed in his ears, and with such a penetrating sound that he felt as if a hot iron had gone through him.

* * * *

While Porphyrius Vladimiritch waited about in the entresol, Arina Pétrovna had, as their grandmother, gathered round her his two sons, and was conversing with them, not without the formed intention of learning something of them.

"Now, what are you doing?" she turned towards the eldest, Peter.

"Ah! not much, grandma; but next year I shall become an officer."

"Will you? Are not the examinations too stiff for you?"

"At the last examination on the rudiments, he

could not keep his countenance," interjected Vladimir.

"What is God?" asked the grandmother, to which Peter replied,

"God is a Spirit—a Spirit——"

"You miserable boy. What is the matter with you? Behold these orphans, even they know better than that!"

"God is an invisible Being," said Anninka, eager to display the light of her knowledge.

"He is Omniscent, All-bountiful, Almighty, Omnipresent," added Anninka. "'Where shall I flee before His face? If I go to heaven, Thou art there; if I bury myself in hell, Thou art there too.'"

"See, now; had you given that answer, you would win your epaulettes!"

Vladimir reddened and held his tongue.

"Yes, yes, children; now we have it. You are not even equal to the ordinary demands of a school-book. Right well has your father brought you up! How does he treat you?"

"Oh, so-so, grandma."

"Does it come to blows?"

"It is not blows so much as the fact that he torments us."

"I don't understand. How can he torment you?"

"Very much so, grandma! We dare not go out of the house without his permission. It is as if we were in bondage!"

"Does he refuse to speak with you even?"

"No. But if we do speak, he does not answer. And how tedious it is to hear him talking to himself."

"He has a habit of listening to what we say at the door, grandma! Quite recently Peter caught him at it."

"The scoundrel! Why does he do it?"

"No reason at all! I told him it was not right to play the eavesdropper; for he might get his nose pinched in the door. His reply was, 'My son, I am like a thief in the night.'"

"Recently, grandma, he brought an apple in from the garden and put it in his cupboard. I ate it. Then he looked for it, and looked for it everywhere, fairly upsetting the whole of the servants with his investigations."

"He has certainly become very greedy?"

"Well, no, not exactly that; but he troubles himself about such trifles. For instance, he likes to spin cotton-wool and gather up fallen fruit——"

"Every morning he celebrates mass in his private room, and after it we receive, each of us, a piece of consecrated wafer, quite over-baked, and very hard. Once we played him a trick. We watched where he used to put the holy wafer, bored a hole through the floor, took out the bread, and poured some oil into it."

"You are downright pernicious brats."

"Ah, no! Just picture his astonishment! The wafer with oil. He went about spitting the whole day, muttering, 'the scoundrels!' But, I say, grandma, he is terribly afraid of you."

"Me! Am I, then, so terrible?"

"He thinks you can put him under a curse. And as for curses—well, it is frightful to see how he fears them!"

Arina reflected. At first thought she: How would it be if I really cursed him? Yes, I will do so! Then, on second thoughts: But what would he do then? He would seek some escape! Then a happy thought struck her.

"Vladimir," she said, "you are a clever young fellow! Go quite gently and listen (she indicates some place below). See if you can find out what they are discussing."

"With pleasure, grandma!"

Vladimir goes on tip-toe to the door and disappears through it.

"Ulitschka," remarked Peter, "sent a message to-day that the doctor had said uncle would either die to-day or at latest to-morrow."

"Was there any discussion at home about the inheritance?"

"Yes, all day. He constantly spoke of it, and he even mentioned Goriushkino. He said to us: 'If Aunt Barbara Mikhailovna had no children, Goriushkino would belong to us. And the children—God knows from whom they have sprung—still, it is not for us to pass judgment. We see the beam in our neighbour's eye, but not the mote in our own.'"

"Ah, but that won't do. Aunt Barbara was married in perfectly regular manner! Everyone can testify to that!"

"I can quite believe that, grandma. But he is always telling the story. He also says that grandma Natalia Vladimirovna was taken from Goriushkino and that she ought lawfully to be in the Gollowlev family. The dead papa gave it to his sister as a dowry. 'And the melons that grow in Goriushkino,' said he, 'such great melons; weigh twenty pounds.'"

"As large as that! I have never heard so before. Well, now, what plans has he formed in regard to Dubrovino?"

Before Peter had returned any answer to his grandmother's last question, Vladimir came back. All eyes were on him at once.

"I couldn't hear," he whispered; "all I could hear was father saying, 'The end of a Christian ought to be free from illness and grief, and full of peace'; and uncle answered, 'Go away, Blood-sucker!'"

"But of any disposition, you heard nothing?"

"There seemed to be some talk on that, but it didn't come to anything. Father had made the door fast and I could hear nothing but whispering. Then, however, I heard uncle cry out: 'Go away!' And after that I bolted as quickly as I could."

"It is all up with the orphans;" and Arina was tormented with inward despair.

"If father secures all, grandma, he won't give anyone else anything," assured Peter. "I suppose that he means to take away even from us our hereditary rights."

"Does he want to go down to his grave with all?"

"Oh, no; he's got other irons in the fire. Recently he asked the pope*: 'How would it be if we erected the Tower of Babylon—should we require very much money?'"

"Come, now, he must have asked that question out of curiosity."

"No. He really has a plan; and if it is not Babylon, then it is about Mount Athos. But to us he'll give nothing."

"He'll get very much more property if uncle dies, grandma?" inquired Vladimir.

"God only knows which of them will die first."

"Be quiet, grandma, be quiet! I can hear him—like a thief in the night. He is listening at the door."

They all kept quiet. But their fear proved ill-founded. Arina sighed, and muttered to herself. The youths looked provocatively at the orphans, as if they wanted to devour them; the girls unwillingly cast their eyes down.

"Have you seen Ma'amselle Lothar yet, cousin?" asks Peter.

* A parish priest.

Anninka and Lubinka looked at each other and then both together asked whether that was something from history or out of a geographical work.

"No, no. She plays the title rôle in *Beautiful Helen*, in the theatre."

They spoke of other pieces.

"You talk a good deal about the theatre, I should think," interjected Arina. "But these girls here won't visit the theatre; they will visit the convent."

"You want to bury us in the convent, grandma?" wailed Anninka.

"Go to the convent at Petersburg, cousins! We'll show you everything there."

"Their minds must think not of pleasure, but spiritual welfare," continued Arina.

"We'll take them for a walk in the monastery of St. Sergius. That'll be a pious enough beginning, grandma."

The eyes of the orphans sparkled and the tips of their noses grew unmistakably red at these words.

"We'll show you everything there is to be seen! In Petersburg there's a great crowd of such ladies as you. They strut proudly along tapping the pavement with their high heels."

"Will you teach them all that stuff, too?" cried Arina. "Now leave them in peace, you would-be teachers, for Jesus' sake! As soon as Uncle Paul is dead, I shall go with the girls to Chotki, and there we will live."

"What a truly becoming conversation you are holding!" came a voice suddenly through the door.

During their chatter, and quite unobserved by them, Porphyrius had stolen in like a thief in the night. His face was pale and wet with tears; his head bowed, and his lips trembled. For a while

his eyes sought the holy image, and, perceiving it, he gave vent to his feelings :

“ Oh, he is bad—very bad,” and he embraced maminka.

“ Has he spoken to you yet ? ”

“ A little, dear mama ; he only said, ‘ Pardon, brother ! He knows things are very bad with him.’ ”

“ Have you, then, felt the motion of his heart-beats ? ”

“ No, maminka ! It is not on that account that I say he is bad. I’m only giving my opinion. A certain strength of judgment is granted to everyone ; and when a man is dying, his sensibilities are at their strongest shortly before the end. That consolation is denied only to sinners.”

“ Did you not say anything at all about the inheritance ? ”

“ No, mama. He wanted to say something, but I stopped him. ‘ Nothing about dispositions now,’ I said to him. ‘ Anything you choose to leave to me I will be satisfied with, brother, and if you leave me nothing at all, even then I will pray for your eternal rest.’ ”

And so the conversation went on until meal-time, during the meal, and after it. Arina could scarcely sit still on her chair for impatience. Ever more vigorous waxed the thought in her, “ Ought I to afflict him with a curse ? ” Porphyrius had no idea of the storm raging in his mother’s breast. He looked so jovial and continued so calmly to torment dear maminka about her despair over an inheritance. “ I will curse him, I will ; yes, I will do it ! ” were the words that kept repeating themselves with ever greater resolution in Arina Péetrovna’s soul.

Incense filled the air ; a long-drawn dirge droned through the house. Those mourners who desired to have a last look at the dead, walked in and out. In his lifetime, Paul Vladimiriteh had not devoted any particular attention to this or that person—but after his death one and all mourned the loss. Now it was, “Never looked with envy on a soul”; “Never did an injury to anyone”; “Never spoke an evil word.” All these qualities which previously were by no means apparent, now came in for due appreciation, and thus, out of the indistinct blur of the customary burial solemnities there was now evolved the type of a “good master.”

A peasant came to Porphyrius bringing three florins.

“I was indebted to the late Paul Vladimiritch,” he explained; “but there was no written acknowledgment kept—here they are.”

Porphyrius took the money, praised the man, and said he would buy oil with the money for the holy lamp.

Of course all this esteem of the merits of the dead man did not go unaccompained by a comparison of Paul with his brother.

People had no love for Porphyrius. Not so much because they could never circumvent him as because he was everywhere on the look-out for small faults, and continually blaming some one. The veriest trifles were taken into account in the matter of reckoning up farm produce: every small delay in payment of a debt punished by the addition of interest.

Many a person had he dragged before a court without gaining anything by it. His habit of intriguing was well known, and he had set everybody at loggerheads with each other by toadying and underhand dealing. The proverb, “When you buy a house, you buy a neighbour with it,” was

brought home to everyone, and all knew what sort of a neighbour the lord of Golovlevo was. But seeing that his baseness—or rather his moral hardening—even though still masked with hypocrisy, always left in its train a certain superstitious fear, the new “neighbours”—Porphyrius always called them “dear neighbours”—greeted him with their hearts full of terror as they filed by the Bloodsucker, who stood in the light of dawn by the coffin with folded hands and upraised eyes.

So long as the dead body lay in the house the inmates all went about on tiptoe. Peter and Vladimir spent the time lighting the candles and swinging the incense. Anninka and Lubinka wept, and in the midst of their tears joined in song with the leader of the choir.

Arina, immediately on learning of Paul’s death, went to her room and shut herself up there. She could weep no longer, but found it necessary to make some definite plan. In Dubrovino she did not think of staying for anything in the world; consequently there was only one thing to do so far as the welfare of the orphans was concerned, and that was to go to Pogorelka, the place she had flung at her daughter as a “scrap of inheritance.”

Calmly she reckoned up her five per cent. state bonds—fifteen thousand roubles, and a like sum was in the possession of her granddaughters, for she had saved up to good purpose. And so her mind was easy on the probable cost of putting the Pogorelka property in a paying condition. She then sent various instructions to the steward of the property and, ordering her travelling-carriage to be prepared, began to pack up. For Porphyrius she felt neither hate nor prejudice, but she had no wish to come into contact with him. Occasionally he peeped into his mother’s room as if he wanted to chat with his “dearest maminka” (he had

observed the preparations for departure, but disguised that fact), but Arina did not grant him permission to come in.

At the end of three days Arina had completed her preparations for departure. The Mass was at an end, and Paul Vladimiritch lowered into his grave.

To the table, as was customary, three ecclesiastics were invited, and among them was a very pious father and the deacon. For the choir a special table in the ante-room was laid. Arina and the orphans appeared in travelling garb, but Porphyrius behaved as if he had not yet noticed their intention. When all were at table, Porphyrius begged the pious father to bless the food and drink. He then poured brandy out for himself and the clerics, crossed himself, and said :

“ To the eternal memory of the spirit in the other world ! Oh, brother, brother ! You have forsaken us ! For whom shall we now live, if not for you ? It was not right of you to treat us so, oh, brother ! ”

After these words he crossed himself again, and drained his glass.

“ Eat, father ! ” he importuned the old priest. “ These are things from the blessed brother’s table ; he loved to eat and he ate well ; but still more, he loved to play the host.”

He had almost completely forgotten his mother. He seemed to recollect her again when the mushrooms were brought on. Taking a spoonful in his hand he would have carried it to her mouth.

“ Just a little, mama ? ”

But Arina only shook her head for answer, and remained immovable. She seemed to be hearkening to something out of curiosity. A strange light appeared to shine before her eyes, the whole comedy,

to the repetition of which she had been so accustomed from girlhood upwards, and in which she had herself taken such an active part, now seemed all so new and unfamiliar.

The meal had begun with a family quarrel. Porphyrius had demanded that Arina should take the place of mother of the house, but Arina rejected the offer.

"No," she said, "sit down! You are master here—keep your place in peace!"

"What are we doing? We will leave the plate of the master of the house untouched here, as if he were sitting an invisible table companion. He is indeed the true master, we are his guests!"

And so it went on. Porphyrius then began a conversation with the clerics on quite a peculiar theme. Turning to the old priest he observed:

"How many are there who do not believe in eternity? I believe in it."

"They are certainly only the desperate," answered the grey-haired priest.

"No, not desperate. Unbelief now springs up as a doctrine."

"There have already been many such doctrines—would they had all disappeared. People believe in wisdom, but not in God. Such doctrinaires are numbered among the learned."

"Yes, little father, you are right. They want to be held as learned men."

All were now busy over soup; for a time nothing was to be heard but the clack of spoons on plates and the noise which the clerics made in blowing on the hot liquid.

"The Catholics," continued Porphyrius, ceasing to guzzle for a moment, "do not reject the immortality of the soul, but they assert that the soul does not arise directly either in hell or heaven. Their view is that the soul must tarry for some

time in an indeterminate state. What should you say to that, worthy father?"

"Oh, leave these vanities! What sings our holy Church? It sings of a rich and lovely place where neither sorrow nor sighs are. No one in the Church speaks of an 'indeterminate' state."

Porphyrius was not satisfied with this, and sought for another encounter. But Arina cut him short.

"Come, now, go on eating, pious chattering! Your soup is already cold," and, turning to the priest, she asked him whether he would like some bread.

Then followed a fresh dish, ham and peas. Porphyrius utilised this opportunity by continuing his interrupted conversation.

"The Jews would not eat this, eh?" he said.

"Filthy people," answered the old priest.

"But the Tartars—have they not also a similar custom?"

"The Tartars are likewise unclean."

"We do not eat horseflesh, but the Tartars feel disgust at pork. Even the people in Paris, during the siege, ate rats."

"Well, they are—Frenchmen."

And thus the conversation dragged along. Crucian carp were now brought on.

"Help yourself, father. The carp are magnificent. Our dead brother fairly revelled in them," said Porphyrius. "Here, also, is some asparagus. In Petersburg people have to pay a silver rouble for this asparagus," he rattled on. "Our blessed brother used to get busy with this asparagus. Here is quite an extraordinarily thick piece."

Arina's heart beat violently in her agitation. A whole hour had gone, and the meal was not yet half over. Porphyrius seemed to delay intentionally. Now he eats something, now lays down

knife and fork and begins to chatter ; then eats again and chats again.

How often did Arina call out in her heart, “ Eat on, Satan ! ” But Porphyrius had probably quite forgotten her presence, and perhaps was intentionally oblivious out of a desire for revenge. At last the roast meats were brought on, and at the same moment, when all rose, and the worthy deacon was about to speak of the “ departed,” a noise was heard outside in the corridor, and voices were heard speaking from without, which had the effect of making a perfect mockery of the scene.

“ What noise is that ? ” cried Porphyrius.

“ If you will allow—they are taking my trunks away,” replied Arina, and added, not without a hint of irony : “ Would you like first to have a look through them ? ”

There was silence. Porphyrius was pale and completely out of countenance. But he had the presence of mind to realise that he must do something to mitigate the fatal apostrophe of his mother, and so, turning to the old father he said :

“ Here is some blackcock ; excellent ! There are, of course, plenty in Russia, but in other lands—”

“ Go on eating, for Christ’s sake ; we have got some twenty-five versts travelling before us, and must go soon ! ” broke in Arina. “ Peter, hurry, dear boy, so that people can get on with the pasties ! ”

Silence again prevailed for some minutes. Porphyrius eats his roast meat in haste, sitting pallid the while, his feet tapping uncasily on the floor.

“ You insult me, dear mama, very deeply ! ” he burst out at last without looking at Arina.

“ Who does ? How ? I have deeply insulted you ? ”

“ Yes, very deeply—very much insulted me ! ”

At this moment—to take your departure—every-
thing going so smoothly—and then suddenly—
these boxes of yours, an invitation to search them—
too insulting ! ” he replied in broken sentences.

“ If you want to know everything, I can give
you an answer. I lived here so long as Paul lived
here ; he is dead, and I am leaving the house.
So far as my luggage is concerned, Ulitushka has
been spying on it for a long time under your orders.
It is better for me, your mother, frankly to say
that I am under suspicion, as if I were a hissing
serpent behind some one’s back ! ”

“ Maminka, dearest ! But you—I——” groaned
Porphyrius.

“ It must remain like that ! ” Arina gave him
no time to answer. “ I have now spoken out ! ”

“ But wherefore, dear, I could——”

“ Let me, for Jesus’ sake, depart in peace.
Here ! —Is my carriage ready ? ”

The sound of bells and the rolling of a carriage
could be heard outside in the court-yard. Arina
rose first from the table, the rest following suit.

“ Now in a moment we shall be on the way ! ”
she said, walking into the ante-room.

The guests sat down again. Porphyrius now
hurriedly endeavoured to launch out on some sort
of justification.

“ Would you not have lived well at Dubrovino,
maminka ? See how beautiful it is here,” he said,
looking into his mother’s eyes like a culpable dog.

“ No, my dear, things must be as I have said.
I don’t want to say an ill word to you, but remain
here I cannot at any price. Now let us pray ! ”

All stood up and prayed ; Arina kissed them all
and blessed them, and with heavy step betook
herself to the door.

Porphyrius Vladimiritch, as head of the house,
led her out to the wing.

At the sight of the equipage the imp of curiosity possessed Porphyrius once more. "That is surely the carriage of brother Paul," flashed through his mind.

"Ah, mamma, mamma; have the carriage unharnessed again!" cried Porphyrius.

Arina did not reply. She had already taken her seat, and only awaited the orphans.

Porphyrius, in the meantime, could not take his eyes off the carriage.

"And how shall we manage about the carriage, maminka? Will you send it back yourself, or shall I send to fetch it?" He simply could not keep silence about it.

Arina was almost trembling with indignation.

"The tarantass belongs to me!" she cried out with such a note of pain that everyone was convinced she spoke the truth. "It is mine, I say, mine! mine! I have proofs, witnesses to hand! But you—I'll just wait and see what you'll do about it!—now then, children, are you ready?"

"Pray, excuse me, dearest maminka! I could not suspect—that the tarantass was not a part of the Dubrovino property."

"It belongs to me, I say! Not to Dubrovino! Don't dare to say another word."

"I am all obedience——"

"Away," she cried, unable to control herself.

The tarantass rolled away down the road at a smart trot. Porphyrius stood at the window weeping in his pocket handkerchief as long as the carriage was in view.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULTS OF EDUCATION.

It had never occurred to Arina Pétrovna that the time could come when she herself must appear to be “one mouth too many.” That time had come, and at a moment when, for the first time in her life, she had to convince herself that both her moral and physical strength were on the point of dissolution. To protect oneself against such an onslaught and ward off its approach are very difficult ; the victim must endure in silence, for the attack is one which can change anyone in a moment from hope to irrevocable ruin.

Arina’s condition was a very harsh one when, after her separation from Porphyrius at Golovlevo, she had repaired to Dubrovino ; yet at least she had known that Paul Vladimiritch, even if he did look askance at her, was not a man for whom a superfluous loaf possessed any significance. But now the whole thing had taken on quite another aspect. She was now at the head of a restricted household, where every scrap had to be taken into account ; she knew that word “scrap,” for, having spent her whole life in the country, she had by intercourse with villagers acquired a tolerably complete idea of the trouble “a mouth too many” brings to a small household.

The management of a place like Pogorelka was difficult matter, and demanded every minute of

Arina's personal supervision ; and although it seemed to her, in observing the slow progress from kopecks to roubles, and from roubles to five-rouble pieces, that no great demands were made on her faculties, she realised that that impression was a mistaken one. She possessed no remarkable experience in these matters, and, moreover, she had lost her former firmness and elasticity. To aggravate matters, the autumn was approaching, and the extremely rainy weather offered an obstacle to Arina's peculiar virtues. The old lady got into a great passion about it, but she could do nothing to improve things.

She now began to notice that all was not well with the two orphans. They were suffering from ennui, and hung their heads. Troubled thought about their future agitated the girls. They formed plans, of a very blameless nature, in which the picture of themselves compelled to work got blurred with thoughts of pleasure. At one time their recollections reverted to the institute in which they had been educated, at another there would rise up in them a feeble hope that they might, with the assistance of acquaintances in the institute, cement a bond of sympathy by means of which they could succeed in penetrating into the clear realms of a genuinely human existence.

But over all these vague opinions prevailed one dominant thought : they must leave Pogorelka, cost what it might ! And thus, one morning, the two girls came to their grandmother and told her that they could not and would not remain there any longer. It was no life at all, they said ; they never saw any men in Pogorelka other than the father, who, whenever he met them, merely talked about young ladies who had allowed their lamps to go out. The girls spoke decisively, because they were afraid of their grandmother, and hence they

exhibited in their attitude all the greater degree of insolence in the full expectation of getting nothing in return but an angry refusal. But, to their astonishment, Arina not only listened to their grievance without anger, but did not even manifest that disposition, so rife in old age, to induce a fruitless conversion of the girls. But it was not only the infirmity of old age that was at the bottom of this change in the old lady, but the thought of something better, something more correct. She understood that in every human character there are certain definite predispositions which, though they may long be dormant, will, when once roused, impel men and women straightway whither the light of life appears—that genial light whose revelation has for so long been denied in the hopeless dark of the present. Arina certainly did try to dissuade the orphans, but she did so feebly and without conviction. She dreaded their future outlook, the more so seeing that she herself had not the slightest bond of connection with the so-called “world.” What was to become of the girls? They had firmly resolved to leave Pogorelka, and, in fact, after some emotional scenes and many postponements for the sake of consoling the old lady, they took their departure.

After her granddaughters had left, Arina’s first feelings were as if something had been torn away from her, or rather as if she were suddenly in possession of a strange kind of freedom to which no limits were assigned, and as if nothing but an empty desert stretched before her. To minimise the effect she hastily shut up the room and boudoir that had been used by the orphans, reserving for herself two rooms, one containing a large glass-panelled cupboard with holy images, the other which served her as a bedroom and dining-room. For the sake of economy she dismissed the servants, and only kept

on an old woman, named Aphimiushka, as caretaker, and a one-eyed wife of a soldier, named Markovna, to do the cooking and washing.

One day now followed another with that oppressive uniformity which characterises country life. No doubt Arina could have overcome her dislike of household economics had she had in front of her some definite life-object which was not beyond her. But everyone had forsaken her, and she, on her part, had forsaken all. Her erstwhile feverish activity had now suddenly given place to a drowsy holiday-calm, and such a calm as, little by little, was undermining all independence and bringing about a change of disposition in her of which a few months back Arina would not have allowed herself to dream. From a strong self-assertive woman, whom no one had ventured to call an old woman, she had become a ruin, for whom neither the past nor the future had any meaning, and for whom the present had no other than a purely momentary importance.

Pogorelka was a miserable property. It stood, so to speak, exposed, having no garden, no shade, and not a trace of comfort. Behind it stood some farm buildings, and all round it, stretching in an endless expanse, fields. There was absolutely nothing in the way of a wooded spot to be seen as far as the eye could reach. But as Arina, since her childhood, had lived in villages, the wretched nature of the landscape had nothing depressing in it to her ; indeed, it awakened a cordial and responsive feeling in her. The best part of her recollections was centred in these bare limitless fields, and every moment her eyes looked for them. She now, again, beheld the lonely villages dotted on the horizon like dark spots, the white churches, the form of a peasant in the furrows ; but no thought animated her ; her power to think seemed

in a manner exhausted, so that she was no longer able to keep her mind fixed on this or that object for any space of time.

At times she seemed to reflect ; but the recollection of her past produced only vague impressions. Many times her mind grew busy over some more definite thought—nothing joyful, for life had been chary to the point of harshness of affording her joy—but a gnawing, bitter, and unendurable thought. Then her heart burst, melancholy invaded her, and the tears welled up in her eyes.

And, generally speaking, Arina lived on in this fashion, as if she had no further part in life, but only just sufficient strength to seek out long-forgotten corners in the ruins of her existence. If she found such corners, life each day went along calmly enough. But when this day-dreaming gave place to night, Arina grew afraid. When night fell, it was the fear of thieves that assailed her ; the fear of ghosts, devils ; in a word, anything her education could conjure up to her mind. Apart from the servants before-mentioned, the only guardian for the whole district of Pogorelka was an old lame man, named Feodor, who, for a couple of roubles a month, was supposed to leave the village and keep a watch on the outlying manorial houses. He generally had a nap in the hay, only coming out at definite times to sound the hour of the night by blows on a copper plate.

There is something uncommonly oppressive about a sleepless night in a Russian village. Life is dead at nine o'clock—seldom later. Arina was sitting before a half-burned candle, endeavouring to entice sleep by a game of patience ; but she had scarcely shuffled the cards when drowsiness overtook her. Hardly, however, had she lain on the swelling feather-bed, when the sleep which had been overcoming her the whole evening suddenly

entirely forsook her. From her pillow a downright unbearable temperature streamed out. She tossed from one side to the other, and would have called out for some one, but knew that none would hear. A mystical stillness reigned all around—that stillness in which the hearkening ear can detect a whole host of sounds.

Somewhere some person dealt a blow; now a yell broke the stillness; and then it was as if some one went across the corridor, and a puff of air were wafted through the room, passing lightly over Arina's face. The lamp was burning near the holy image, and irradiating the different objects in the apartment in mysterious fashion, as if they were not so much tangible things as outlines of things. A mouse gnawed at the wall. "Quiet, wretched creature!" calls Arina—and all is quiet. And so, in this morbid dozing, she passes the greater part of the night, and only towards morning at last sinks to sleep. At six o'clock she was again on her feet, thoroughly exhausted by her sleepless night.

Deprived of all comfort, the decrepitude of old age besieged Arina. But the frailer she became the stronger became her desire to live, or rather to nibble at life; and with that desire came a complete absence of all idea of death. She had once feared death, now she never gave a thought to it.

Everything had she denied herself through life—good eating, rest, and nursing, contact with life-loving men—all these worldly things now became objects of enviable worth. "Wouldn't I just like a supper of goose's liver, or sprats with cream," said she to herself, and the thought was so lively that the corners of her mouth opened as if in anticipation of the delicacies. Then, in the night, she tossed again from side to side, almost dying of fright at every sound. "How much stronger are

the walls of Golovlevo," she thought; "how much more reliable the watchmen."

By day she often passed hours together without getting an opportunity of chatting with a soul, and it was during those periods of involuntary silence that the thought came into her mind: "Yes, in Golovlevo there are a few people; there, at least, there is a soul or two with whom one can converse." Golovlevo now constantly stood before her mind's eye, and the more she thought about the place, the more it evolved itself into a centre about which was grouped nothing but ideas of "good living."

The more the picture of Golovlevo grew in her mind, the stronger became her yearning to see the place. When she saw herself condemned irretrievably to helplessness and solitude, then there began to creep into her soul all that weakness and despondency which at last completely break the tottering will-power. Porphyrius, who, on his first visit to Pogorelka, received a very cold welcome, suddenly dropped his hateful character. Now both of them forgot the old injuries, and it was Arina who made the first advance towards reconciliation.

She began with friendly enquiries. From Pogorelka came messengers to Porphyrius, at first not often, but later ever more frequently. Once they came back with mushrooms, and then they had gherkins, and then some young hens were slaughtered for Arina in these corrupt times, and at last it came to "Could you have some crucian caught in Dubrovino; dear Paul never denied his mother crucian."

Porphyrius wrinkled his forehead, but he did not want openly to express his displeasure. He was much grieved about the request for crucians, but he entertained a mortal dread that his mother might curse him for a refusal. He had a lively

recollection of his mother's words on a previous occasion: "I will come to Golovlevo, open the church, call for the priest, and cry in a loud voice, 'I curse you !'" This restrained him from many of those vile actions in which he was a past master. So he fulfilled his mother's wish, and wrote, saying: "I am sending you gherkins, too, dearest mamma; the best I have. As regards the fowls, with the exception of the leghorns, which are indispensable to me, I possess only capons, which are too large for your small table. But won't you share my humble board in Golovlevo; we will roast—my cook is first-rate—one of these strutting idlers, and gorge, dearest maminka, our fill ?"

After that, Arina came to Golovlevo. She sampled with Porphyrius his fowls and ducks, slept her fill o' nights and after meals, and joined in interminable conversations on those utterly meaningless trifles in which Porphyrius took such a keen delight. She did not even give up these visits when she was informed that Porphyrius, grown tired of his long widowerhood, had taken into his household from a religious life, a young girl who bore the name of Eupraxia.

On the contrary, she repaired at once on receipt of this news to Golovlevo, and, without waiting until she had got down from the carriage, cried out with almost childish impatience to Porphyrius: "Hi, you old sinner, now just show me your lady!" She was in an excellent temper the whole day, for Eupraxia herself was serving at table, and after the meal set up her bed for her. In the evening, Arina played cards with Porphyrius and his lady.

Porphyrius was very satisfied with this aspect of things, and, as a sign of his filial devotion, ordered a pound of caviare, among other things, to be put in Arina's tarantass, on her departure for Pogorrelka—this was a proof of the highest esteem, for

the caviare was not a product of the estate, but had been purchased by him. The gift so moved the old woman that she could hardly contain herself, and cried out :

" Now, I thank you ! God will be good to you for caring for and pampering your mother, dear son, in her waning days. I will now return to Pogorelka once more, but will not tarry long there. I have always relished caviare, and, with your kind permission, I will take good care to enjoy it."

* * * * *

Five years had flown since the time Arina had flown to Pogorelka. Porphyrius was at his country seat, Golovlevo, which nothing would induce him to leave. He was visibly changed ; his hair had gone, and his face was falling in ; but he cheated, lied, and chattered more than ever, because now dear mamma was continually near him, and it was one of the pleasures of his table to have an attentive listener to his dreary garrulity.

It must not be supposed that Porphyrius was a hypocrite in the sense that Tartuffe was, or of any contemporary French bourgeois. No, even if he was a hypocrite, he was a hypocrite of a genuinely Russian stamp, a man without any moral rule of conduct, who recognised no other truth than that contained in an A B C book. He was entirely without a conscience, cantankerous, mendacious, and loquacious ; but he feared, above all, the Devil. These were, of course, qualities which could hardly furnish the basis for a genuine hypocrite.

We Russians have not even a colourable system of education, and we do not rear future defenders and propagandists of this or that body of social principles, but just allow our issue and descendants to grow up like nettles in a hedge.

Hence it is that we have very few hypocrites—but very many liars, psalm-smiters, and gossips. There is no need for us to be hypocritical over any particular set of social conditions, for we know of none such, and there is no veiling the actual state of things. We are absolutely free in the sense that we talk away, lie and speak scandal each for himself, and in the most unprincipled manner.

Whether we ought to rejoice over this or lament, it is not for me to judge. Yet I think that even if hypocrisy awakens indignation and fear, mendacity is equally capable of exciting loathing and abhorrence.

And hence it is best to abandon the question whether conscious hypocrisy is preferable to unconscious hypocrisy, and to keep our distance alike from hypocrites and from liars.

Porphyrius was less a hypocrite than a liar and babbler. Banished to his village, he thought himself free, for nothing could have afforded his natural inclinations such scope as this place. In Golovlevo he could from no quarter endure the slightest contradiction or the smallest restraint. No tribunal had he to fear, no envious looks disturbed him; and thus there was no path on which he could have exercised any control over himself, and an entirely unrestrained eccentricity was the ruling trait in his character.

Long had he enjoyed this complete freedom from every moral limitation, and if it was the fact that he had not sooner retired to village life, the true cause was that he feared idleness. More than thirty years had he spent in the gloomy atmosphere of a government department, and had readily adapted himself to all the habits and inclinations of an old official, who could not dream of being, even for one minute of his life, away from his occupation.

But one sphere of active inactivity was as good as another for Porphyrius. Indeed, as soon as he had settled down in Golovlevo, he undertook a veritable host of meaningless duties. In the early mornings he would be sitting at his writing-desk, busying himself with matters of household administration. First, he would settle with the milkmaid, then with the caretaker and the inspector, instituting a very exact calculation into money and material, entering every kopeck, every little item in the pile of books, and deducing results therefrom; finding, perhaps, that here he had lost half a kopeck, there found a whole kopeck too many. He was never idle for a moment, and everything bore the appearance of a restless and joyous hive of industry.

Every link with the world outside was broken, so far as he was concerned. He received neither newspapers, books, nor letters. One of his sons, Vladimir, had ended by committing suicide, while his only relations with the other, Peter, were an occasional letter enclosing money. Ignorance, incompetent industriousness, and want of judgment, a veritable well of nothingness—that was the kind of atmosphere that surrounded him, and he evinced not the slightest effort to get away from it. He only heard that Napoleon III. had ceased to reign about a year after the death of that monarch, and then he learnt it from a police constable. The “news” excited no special emotion in him; he merely crossed himself and said: “God has taken him, and in a trice all his dreams are shattered.”

He had chosen for his housekeeper a person who harmonised to a nicety with the state of things created by himself. The spinster, Eupraxia, was the daughter of a chorister of the church of Nikolai, and was in all things a real treasure. It was not

in quickness of apprehension, resourcefulness, or cleverness that she shone ; but, instead, she was restlessly active, quiet, and unassuming. When she first entered the place she had turned to Porphyrius with the question : “ Is it permitted that I may drink cold lemon-squash when I need it, or must I first ask leave ? ” Porphyrius was overwhelmed by this moderation, and freed her from every obligation to render an account. Externally, she offered no great attractions to a lover ; but to a man who was not desirous, and who knew that he possessed as much as he required, she could afford a certain satisfaction. Her face was broad and pale, her forehead narrow and framed with sparse blonde hair, her eyes were hard and gloomy, her nose perfectly straight, her mouth wide and drawn down in such a manner as to suggest that she wanted to smile. Generally speaking, there was nothing remarkable about her but her back, which was so broad and powerful that even the calmest man would have involuntarily raised his hand “ to give ” (as we say in Russia) “ the girl a friendly blow between the shoulders.” She knew this, and was not ill-pleased, so that when Porphyrius himself manifested an intention, for the first time, to catch her lightly by her broad neck, she quietly turned her shoulders towards him.

In the prevailing solitude the arrival of Arina brought a little life into the house, and in course of time Porphyrius not only accustomed himself to her visits, but was pleased to see her.

They had their fill, too, of gossip. They sat down and chatted from morning till evening and, apparently, were unable to exhaust the springs of conversation. They chatted about everything ; how the harvest was better once than it was now ; what sort of life landowners once led ; and the

quality of gherkins. At times, when the conversation began to pall, they took to playing cards, and kept it up till an advanced hour of the night. They endeavoured to initiate Eupraxia in the art of whist, but their efforts were doomed to disappointment. On evenings like these the great house of Golovlevo was as if imbued with fresh life. All the windows were lit up, and shadows played behind the blinds, giving travellers the idea that some joyous news must have arrived. The samovar, coffee-pots, and cakes seemed hardly ever to leave the table, and Arina's heart grew happy and contented.

* * * * *

November was drawing to a close. The earth was swathed to the limitless horizon in its white shroud. Out of doors all was gloom, and a fine snow was falling, while a keen, cold wind droned through it. The village, the church, the neighbouring wood—everything vanished in the snowy twilight which enveloped the air. In the garden of Golovlevo the wintry blast raged with violence, but within all was clear, warm, and pleasant. On the table stood the samovar, and around it sit Arina Pétrovna, Porphyrius Vladimiritch, and Eupraxia. At the side stands an inlaid table, on which were scattered a pack of cards. Eupraxia, who sits by the samovar, is spilling the tea from the cups and wiping it up with a handkerchief. The over-full samovar begins now to sing, to purr, and at last to bubble over. Clouds of steam rise up from under the lid and veil the tea service almost to invisibility.

The conversation begins.

"How many times," asks Arina Pétrovna of Eupraxia, turning towards her, "how many times, to-day, have you been a loser?"

"I should not have lost had I not been so silly. I wanted to do you a pleasure," answered Eupraxia.

"Oh, yes, you say that now. I appreciated your great pleasure whenever I put a three under your five. True, I am not Porphyrius; he plays with you out of sheer wantonness; but I have no right to do that."

"Could you, then, play tricks on me?"

"Such a lapse of manners would never occur to me."

"Well, but whom would I have fallen foul of when I was about to try and take the seven of clubs with the eight of hearts? I noticed it myself and corrected the error."

With these words Eupraxia rose to take the tea from the samovar, turning her back on Arina.

"He! What a back you've got. God bless it!" cried out Arina, involuntarily.

"Ay, ay, she has a back and no mistake," said Porphyrius mechanically.

"It's 'back' here, and 'back' there. Oh, the godless, the godless! What on earth has my back done to you?"

Eupraxia looked from right to left and smiled. Her back was a regular hobby-horse. Even the old cook had noticed it and exclaimed:

"Ah! The back of her! Why, it's like a lump o' hewn stone!"

Tea was poured out, and the samovar left in peace. The snow-storm raged without.

"Let it howl," said Porphyrius. "Let it bellow outside while we can sit comfortably here at tea, eh, maminka?"

"He! it is not very nice out in the fields for a man whom God has destined for work in the open. But why should we speak about it! Great is God's goodness towards us!"

"He has given us wood for fuel, and food in

plenty. He alone is responsible for all these blessings ! We, indeed, are of the opinion that we deserve all and earn all ourselves, but when we come to look into things a little more closely, and make comparisons, then we find that all is from Him alone. If He does not will it, then we have nothing at all. I should like, for example, to eat an orange now, and dear mamma, too, wishes that I would treat her. Money have I to buy them and everything. I only need to take what I want—but God speaks : ‘ the philosopher shall have no gherkins ! ’ ”

There was general laughter.

“ Lord, how you can rattle on ! ” said Eupraxia, interrupting him. “ I had an uncle in Pesotchno who was so God-fearing and pious that God would probably have done anything for him—but when the snow-drifts overtook the land he perished in one of them ! ”

“ Yes ! If it pleases God that a man shall perish of cold, he does so ; if not, he remains in the land of the living. With prayers, too, it is rather peculiar. Some are heard, others go unheard. The heard prayer is followed by results, but the unheard prayer, no matter what it may be for, remains unfruitful. It is probable that your uncle’s prayer was unfruitful, and hence he got nothing by it.”

“ It just occurs to me that, in my twenty-fourth year, I went to Moscow, and——”

“ Pardon me, mamma, you are wandering from the subject. Man prays for everything that is necessary for him. He requires oil, coal, gherkins—in a word, everything. On occasion, nothing is wanting to him, but yet, in his human weakness, he still prays. You ask for oil, but He sends coal or pinewood blocks ; you ask for beautiful warm weather, but He sends rain or hail. And you

have to put up with it without grumbling. Thus, last September, we prayed for cooler weather, that the corn might not be ruined by the heat, but He sent no cooler weather and our winter-corn dried up."

"How could it have dried up?" remarked Arina. "In Novinki, the winter crops were regarded as very good."

"Ah, yes, that may well be. We are, as far as we can be, reasonable and clever; but God sets all our plans and wishes at naught in a moment. And now tell us, dearest maminka, what you were going to say happened to you in your twenty-fourth year?"

"Ah! It was some proof of God's goodness. But I have completely forgotten now what it was."

"Perhaps it will occur to you some other time. Come, taste some of the preserved fruits. These are cherries from Golovlevo, and Eupraxia herself has tried them."

"Yes, I like them. Cherries are things I don't often get. Once, I used to get a lot, but now—they are fine, too, juicy and fat. They are not so sweet in Dubrovino. You made some cognac with them, Eupraxia, I suppose?"

"Certainly. I made it in the way you told me. But I wanted, afterwards, to ask you this: How do you season gherkins? Do you put cardamom with the water?"

"I am afraid I don't recollect, dearest child; once we certainly added cardamom, but it is not done now. When I get home I will look around and see if I cannot find the recipe. When I was younger and stronger I used to note down everything. Where anything pleased me I asked about it at once, wrote down the recipe, and tried it at home. Once I met with a secret that I would have given a thousand roubles for, but the possessor of

it would not reveal it, and there was nothing more to be done. Afterwards, however, I pressed a five-rouble piece in the hand of the keeper of it, and she told me all, down to the smallest detail."

"Yes, yes, maminka, you were always—a minister!"

"Minister or not, I have never lost anything, but always increased everything. Now I am eating of my well-earned bread."

"God thank you for it, maminka, for all eternity."

Porphyrius stood up, went to his mother, and kissed her hand.

"And I thank you that you have cared for your mother in such hospitable manner."

Arina had already emptied two cups of tea and was beginning to cast eyes at the card table; and Eupraxia, too, was bursting with impatience to measure her wits once more at card-games. But this wish remained unfulfilled through Arina herself, who suddenly called something to mind.

"I have some news," she cried. "Yesterday, a letter arrived from my orphans!"

"They have been silent for a long time before letting us hear anything of them. Does not everything go well with them? Are they in need of money?"

"No, they don't ask for any. Here, read it yourself."

Arina brought from her pocket a letter, which she handed to her son. The latter read as follows:—

"DEAR GRANDMA,

"You have sent us no fowls or hens at all; nor even money, but place it all out at interest. We are not in Moscow, but in Charkow, and have gone to the theatre. In the summer we are to play at the Annual Fair. I, Anninka, have

deputised in ‘Périgole,’ and Lubinka in ‘The Eyes of Annuta.’ I was called several times, especially after the scene where Périgole goes off singing, ‘I am ready—ready—ready.’ Lubinka, too, very much pleased everybody. The director has granted me a salary of a hundred roubles a month and a benefit in Charkow, and Lubinka a salary of seventy roubles and a benefit in the summer at the Fair. In addition to all that we get presents from officers and officials. Of course, the latter often give us counterfeit money, so that we have to be very careful. You, dear grandma, are still in Pogorelka. We shall never return, and do not understand how anyone can possibly live there. The first snow has now fallen, and we have been enjoying a sleigh journey with the officials. One of them put a champagne glass on his head and danced a trepak with it there—it was splendid! Another, who hails from Petersburg, however, is not quite sane. He has a fixed idea that he is bound to read the ‘Collection of the best Russian Songs and Romances,’ and is so smitten with it that in the middle of court sessions he falls in a faint. At other times we spend the entire day with the officers; we go out walking, dine in the best restaurants, and sup without having to pay anything ourselves. But you, grandma, save nothing in Pogorelka, and eat up everything that grows there: mead, hens, and mushrooms. We should very much like the capital—Pardon, grandmother, our cavaliers have come to fetch us for a sleigh journey. Live well, dearest.

“ANNINKA AND LUBINKA.”

“Pfui,” Porphyrius spat out, giving the letter back.

Arina sat silent, and did not speak again for some time.

" You have not answered them, maminka ? "

" I have not had time yet, as I only got the letter yesterday. I came to you to see what ought to be done. I had almost forgotten all about it."

" Don't answer it at all ; that's the best thing to do."

" Why shouldn't I answer it ? I am bound to do so. Pogorelka belongs to them."

Porphyrius reflected. An evil thought rose in his mind.

" If they once forget themselves in this sink of iniquity," continued Arina, " no one can give them back their woman's honour."

" Do they find it very indispensable ? " laughed Porphyrius.

" Well, isn't it for a girl the greatest treasure in the world ? Who would marry such a girl ? "

" It seems a matter of indifference these days whether they get a husband or not. People laugh nowadays over the precepts of religion."

Porphyrius was suddenly silent as it occurred to him that his conduct with the young woman from a religious sphere was in no way different.

" Do you know," he asked, collecting himself, " what I would do in your place ? I would get them to give me complete power over Pogorelka."

" But I have full freedom of administration ? "

" More. You can sell, convert, in a word, can dispose of it entirely as in your opinion you think right."

Arina was silent for a long time. There was something disagreeable about Porphyrius' insinuation. In spite of all the warmth and riches of Golovelvo, here he was, not without design, talking of a full power of disposal and manifesting a desire to fashion a fresh snare. She reproached herself for having shown him the letter. At last,

however, Eupraxia came to the rescue by suggesting that they should begin to play cards.

"Don't you recollect what day it is?"

"November 23rd, maminka," answered Porphyrius somewhat vaguely.

"The 23rd—the 23rd! Yes, surely you know what happened on that day? Have you forgotten the mass for the dead?"

Porphyrius grew pale and crossed himself. Some minutes later he searched the calendar, finding the following entry:

"On Nov. 23, the date of the death of my dear son, Vladimir. Rest, beloved dust, and pray with God for your father who on this day will pray to your memory."

"What can we do now, maminka?"

"God may know of your omission, but perform the office of the dead in the morning—mass and meal as is customary. I have the feeble memory of an old woman and so came to remind you of it."

"Oh, sinner! It is a good thing the lamps are burning in the bedroom. It is true it is not a day of festival; they were only lit for the Annunciation. Eupraxia came and asked if she should not extinguish them. But I said, 'Christ be with them, let them burn!'"

Porphyrius then made various arrangements for the morrow's ceremony, and then all three resumed their card-playing. In the pauses, Porphyrius gave himself over to maudlin recollections of his dead son.

"And how well-behaved he was! Did nothing without permission. If he wanted paper it was, 'Papa, may I take some paper?' Oh, Vladimir, Vladimir! in the name of God! why should you have forsaken your father!"

A few more turns were played; then followed further reminiscences of Vladimir.

"And, then, how suddenly he fell. I do not

myself in the least understand it. He lived so well and peaceably—and suddenly it was all over with him!—Just think, mamma, what a man can mutiny against! Against his own life and the disposition of God the Father! And why? Did he want for anything? Money? I have never been sparing of it; even my enemies would not deny that. But if once anything seemed insufficient, he must fly into a passion! Papa has so much money! Papa is expecting his revenues, and hopes that they will soon arrive; and then comes the messenger, saying: The peasants of Terpenkovo will pay no more taxes! Nothing to do but to send a complaint to the justice of the peace! Ah! Vladimir, my son! You were not a bad boy; but you have deserted your father! And how clever he was! When only seven, and lying ill with measles, he asked blessed Sascha, ‘Mamma, mamma! Is it true that only the angels have wings?’ She answered: ‘Certainly, only the angels!’ ‘Well, now, how did papa, when he came in here just now, fly out again?’”

But as the card-playing went on, and Porphyrius found himself with a good trump hand, he recovered his best spirits, and laughed and joked in a downright genial tone of voice. Suddenly, in the midst of a general round of merriment, Arina paused and hearkened to something.

“Quiet! Who is it coming?” she exclaimed.

Porphyrius and Eupraxia also listened, but they could hear nothing.

“I tell you, some one is coming! The wind blows the sound to us. It is already quite near!”

Again they all listened, and indeed all now did hear the tinkling of bells in the distance, at one moment dying away, and then sounding more loudly, as it was borne on the wind. Five minutes later voices were heard in the courtyard.

"The young master, Peter Porphyritch, has arrived!" echoed in the ante-room.

Porphyrius stood up, but he remained rooted to the spot and as pale as death.

* * * * *

Peter stepped briskly in, kissed his father's hand, repeated the salutation to his mother, and bowed to Eupraxia. He was a young man of twenty-five, somewhat handsome in exterior, and dressed in a costly officer's uniform. That was really all one could have said about him, and even Porphyrius could not have said more. The mutual relations between father and son were so thoroughly artificial that they might as well not have existed at all. For Porphyrius, his son was a man to whom, according to legal requirements, he had to pay a certain fixed rent, in the shape of a draft, and from whom he was entitled to nothing more than esteem and politeness. Peter, on his side, knew that he had a father who at any time could embarrass him. He liked coming to Golovlevo, especially since he had become an officer, not because he found any pleasure in conversing with his father, but because every man instinctively returns to the place of his childhood. He now seemed to be in a condition of necessitousness, but he did not allow this to be observable through any of those external signs that are commonly displayed by the spendthrift scion of a noble house on his arrival at the parental domicile.

He was not very communicative. To his father's: "Well, what a surprise! I am pleased. Here was I sitting and thinking, whom has God brought in the night? And see who it is," he answered either by silence or a forced smile.

For half an hour Porphyrius, talking on trifling

subjects, endured the indifference of his offspring, but at last he could stand it no longer and remarked :

“ You are not very cordial, my son. I certainly should not be able to say that you were an amiable child.”

“ Why should I be ? ”

“ Why ? Haven’t I cared for you ? And now you sit here and merely think how necessity and care would vanish if you had got everything from me.”

“ Who do you mean by the ‘ You ’ ? ”

“ Yourself, of course ! There was another, now departed, God keep him in rest, similar to——”

“ I am eternally grateful to you ! ”

“ I have never seen a trace of gratitude in you.”

“ I have not a fawning character—that is the reason ; but why do you always speak in the plural to me ? Only *one* son has died ! ”

“ Yes, he died, and God punished him. He was disobedient ; but still, I think of him. To-morrow, I am holding a service and funeral repast to his memory.”

And thus they went on for some time. Arina sat and listened in the easy-chair. It seemed like a very old story to her, the commencement of which she no longer recollects.

“ Come, now, you fighting cocks,” endeavouring to lend to her voice a jocular note. “ Scarcely have you set eyes on one another when the feathers begin to fly. Now, you young people, just sit peaceably by one another, and speak amiably to each other. I, an old woman, will listen and rejoice thereat. You, Peter, must give way, for otherwise your father would always have to yield simply because—he is the father. But you, Porphyrius, retire into yourself ! He is your son, an untried stripling. He has travelled seventy versts on roads full of holes, in a carriage that has

had to drive its way through snow-drifts ; he is tired, half-frozen to death, and must have a good sleep. So let us separate, and each go to his own room, and your tempers will then calm themselves. Let us now sup—and then, with God, to bed."

This admonition did not fail of its purpose ; not, however, because it had anything convincing in itself, but because Porphyrius saw that he would have to hold himself in, in order to conclude the day as peacefully as possible. So he rose, kissed his mother's hand, gave a blessing "for form's sake," and ordered the cloth to be laid. The evening meal passed off in silence and vexation, and very soon the room was empty. The house became quieter and quieter, and a death-like silence spread from room to room.

Porphyrius could not sleep. A host of monstrous shapes thronged his bed and seemed to be about to throttle him. But it was not the puzzling arrival of Peter that so agitated him, for, come what might, Porphyrius was always prepared "for everything." He knew that Peter was not a match for his cunning, and could do nothing to extricate himself from that web of vague and corrupt aphorisms in which he, Porphyrius, was involved from head to foot. For him there existed no sorrow, no joy, no hate, and no love. In his eyes the whole world was a pit which opposed no limits to an endless sanctimoniousness. Once only had he experienced pain—when Vladimir took his life ; but he recovered. It was a mournful story for some two years. For those two years Vladimir restrained himself, exhibiting, in the beginning, pride and resolution in the face of his father's scanty support ; but his resolution weakened, and he then began to weep, to pray, and, finally to threaten. All he got from his father was some maxim or motto, which for him was the stone

offered to a hungry man. Whether Porphyrius knew that he was offering stones and not bread—this question was not decided—at all events he had nothing else to give, and he gave his stone as the only thing he had. But, in course of time, when he recognised the true meaning of a family quarrel ending in suicide, he soon lit upon a whole selection of suitable maxims, such as “God punishes disobedient children,” “God humbles the proud,” and with them he calmed all his qualms.

So, too, now. There was no doubt that something had occurred with Peter. If Peter had involved himself in some false position, he must extricate himself. That was the answer he would give his son on the morrow. But suppose Peter, like Vladimir, should reject the stone which was offered in place of bread ? How, if he—— Porphyrius spat at this thought, regarding it as the whispering of the Evil One. He rolled from one side to the other, but could not get any sleep.

Peter, too, lay sleepless, although his journey had, of course, sorely tried him. He had not any clear idea how he should accomplish the purpose for which he had come to Golovlevo. Indeed, to tell the truth, he was absolutely certain that his plan was hopeless ; but yet he was urged on by a feeling that he must “try everything, to the very utmost extreme !”

Would it not be better to take his revolver and walk up, saying : “I am unworthy to wear the uniform ! I have embezzled government money, and a well-merited and sharp sentence has been pronounced on me ! A crack !—and all is over ! The dead Lieutenant Gollovlev would be struck off the lists—yes, that would perhaps be the most decorous way out of it. His comrades would say : ‘He was unfortunate, and allowed himself to be misled ; but he was a good comrade all the same !’ ”

But instead of acting decisively like that, he had published the affair on all sides—and now they had dismissed him as from a stated time, in the course of which he would have to reimburse the missing money. If he failed, banishment from his regiment would follow.

To comply with this demand he had come to Golovlevo with the full conviction that he would receive a stone instead of bread. “But perhaps it would be all right! Ha! The present Golovlevo would disappear, and in its place would rise a new one with a new master. Not that the father—would die—wherefore?—but there would then be a new master—perhaps even grandmother would do something. She has money, and even though he was aware that she was not too rich—she would give it to him. ‘Now,’ she will surely say, ‘travel fast hence, that the time limit for repayment may not elapse!’ And he would travel, curse the drivers—and two hours before the expiration of his grace he would be again with his regiment. But he has only two days. Will he succeed? Certainly not!”

Thoughts like these ceaselessly invade his dozing brain, one after another. For something like four hours the house of Golovlevo lies in gloomy stillness.

On the next day the whole house is up betimes. All betake themselves to church with the exception of Peter, who pleads fatigue and stays in the house. After the mass and service, they all walk homewards, and now Peter, as is customary, walks beside his father; but Porphyrius keeps his hand by his side, and everyone observes that he has not once made the sign of the cross on his son. The quarrel of the previous day had not then been dissipated overnight, but had taken on still sharper outlines, so that Arina Pétrovna grew

seriously troubled, and asked Eupraxia to enquire whether anything in particular had occurred.

"How should I?" answered Eupraxia. "I cannot interfere in their private affairs."

"You can't? Has, then, my grandson said nothing to you?"

"What should he say? He has constantly hung round the corridor for me, and Porphyrius Vladimiritch has noticed it."

"Aha! That's how matters are!"

In truth, in spite of his distressful condition, Peter had not lost his wanton levity of mind. He had passed remarks about Eupraxia's back, and it was solely on her account that he had not gone to church, hoping she would not leave the house. He waited about for her, and when she appeared, seized her by the arm, saying:

"Yes, that's a truly splendid back of yours;" but at that very moment the dining-room door opened, and the form of his father appeared.

"If you have come here, wretched one, to act the fool, I'll have you thrown down the steps," Porphyrius said in an indescribably malevolent tone of voice.

Of course, for a moment, Peter was completely nonplussed. He realised that this encounter was not exactly calculated to favour his plans. So he decided to hold his tongue, and put off what he had to say till the next day. But he did nothing to mitigate his father's disposition, and went on smoking his cigarette without heeding his father's furious pantomime display against the clouds of smoke. He continued to cast Eupraxia flirtatious seductive glances, while Eupraxia in return, smiled and made such sheep's eyes at him, that Porphyrius must have noticed it.

The day wore slowly on. Arina proposed a game of cards. But the proposal fell flat. After

midday meal, Arina said she was going back to Pogorelka ; but Porphyrius, horrified, would hear nothing of it, saying he had no wish to be left alone with his son.

She decided to stay on, and Porphyrius, having sent Eupraxia into the village on an errand to the priest, took his nap. Arina betook herself to her room, and dozed in her easy-chair.

Peter held this to be the most favourable moment to try his luck with his grandmother.

"What do you want, then ? A game with me, an old woman ?" asked Arina.

"No, grandma ; I have come on business !"

"Well, tell me all about it."

Peter stood motionless awhile. At last he collected himself.

"Grandma, I have gambled away State money."

A cloud seemed to waver before Arina's eyes.

"Is it much ?" she asked in a shocked tone, her eyes looking up petrified at her grandson.

"Three thousand florins."

A minute of deep silence followed. Arina looked restlessly about as if she expected help from some quarter near at hand.

"Are you aware that Siberia will not be kept long waiting for you ?" she said at length.

"Yes ; I know."

"Poor boy, poor boy !"

"Grandma, can I ask a loan of you ? I will pay a good rate of interest !"

Arina became deeply agitated.

"What do you want from me ?" she cried. "I have only enough money for my burial and commemoration service ! No, no, leave me ; do me that kindness ! Why not ask papa ?"

"No, never ! I had hopes of you, grandmother !"

"God, what have you done ! And I would give

it to you gladly if I had anything. If you go to papa in a friendly spirit, and tell him what has happened, that you have fallen from youthful inexperience, and that he must punish you. . . . Fall on your knees with tears in your eyes, and kiss his hand—he likes that so much—and you see if he does not take out his purse for his dear son."

"I do that? What are you thinking about? Wouldn't it be better if you said, 'Give him the money, or I will curse you'? He has long feared your curse!"

"But wherefore curse? Even if you did honour your father a little more, you would not lose your head for it. He is your father. Do as I say!"

Peter set his arms akimbo, and paced up and down, as if in thought.

"No! It is all in vain—he won't give anything. If I did all that and went in smiting my forehead with entreaties—he would give nothing! But if you would only threaten him with your curses."

"Try it, perhaps you will move him. How could you have done this thing? Is it, then, attended with so little risk, gambling away State money? Has anyone taught you that?"

"Oh, I took it and gambled. But if you have no money, give me some of the orphans'!"

"What are you asking of me? How can I? No, do me the kindness to leave me; speak no further of this affair."

"Very well, then, you will not? I would have given good interest."

"Oh, don't insult me!" cried Arina Pétrovna. "Go, now! Your father will affirm that I first sent you to him. Oh, God! I, an old woman, resting my life out here for a short time, dreaming so softly, and then comes such an affair as this!"

"Very well. I will go. For a mere three

thousand roubles a son must be sent to Siberia. You will not forget a prayer for my journey there?"

Peter disappeared. What was he to do now? There was only one thing—to disclose the matter to his father. But he would put it off till the next day. "To-morrow it must happen," he repeated to himself in a gloomy tone.

* * * * *

Peter rose early after a sleepless night. A twofold thought harassed him: on the one hand it raised the hope, 'perhaps he will give it to you after all!' And then came the pressing question: 'Wherefore have I travelled here at all?' Perhaps he did not know his father, or at all events had no idea of his father's weak side. All he seemed to feel was this one thing, that when in the presence of his father, face to face with him, he had always experienced a sense of paralysis and embarrassment. It had been so with him from childhood upwards.

Anxiety seized him. He knew he had only a few hours, and must act at once. Having screwed himself up to the necessary pitch of courage, he buttoned up his cloak, whistled a tune, and betook himself with an apparently firm step to his father's cabinet.

Porphyrius was just then at prayers. He was very God-fearing and daily spent several hours at devotions. He prayed, however, not because he loved God and hoped by prayer to enter into community with Him, but because he feared the Devil, and hoped that God would protect him. He knew a host of prayers, but more especially he knew very minutely the external technique of prayer, that is to say, he understood when it was

necessary to move the lips and roll the eyes, when one ought to place the hands together and when to spread them apart. His eyes and nose reddened at the appropriate moment, when, according to the practice of prayer, that condition was demanded of him. But his praying neither refreshed him nor cleared his perceptions, nor did it kindle the gloom in his soul with the beams of its heavenly light. He could pray, however, and at the same time turn his body so as to see when anyone went into the cellar without asking permission.

When Peter entered, Porphyrius was kneeling with outstretched arms. He did not alter his position in the least, but merely made a sign in the air with his arm to indicate that he had no time to spare. Peter went into the dining-room and waited. The next half-hour seemed to him an eternity, the more so as he was convinced his father was intentionally keeping him waiting. At first, he sat down quietly there, then he wandered up and down, and at last he began to whistle softly to himself. At once the door of the cabinet opened, and the disagreeable voice of Porphyrius called out :

“ He who wants to whistle can go into the stable ! ”

Immediately after that, Porphyrius, in black coat and snow-white shirt, as if he had some festival in anticipation, entered the room. His features were friendly, exhaling peace and joy. He stepped up to his son, blessed, and kissed him.

“ I greet you, my son ! ”

“ I greet you.”

“ Have you passed a good night ? ”

“ Yes, thank you.”

“ God be praised. With one’s parents one always sleeps better. I myself know the experience. However well you live in Petersburg, you can’t

sleep so deliciously as in Golovlevo. Will you take some tea?"

"No! I have something important to speak about. I must leave again in six hours."

"Very well. But, dear son, I never deliberate first, I always have my answer ready. If you want something reasonable I shall certainly not refuse it. My nature is thus constituted: If you seek from me something unrighteous—don't be angry with me, but I should have to refuse. Subterfuges I know not. But come, we will go to my cabinet. Speak, and I will listen to what you want to say."

When in the cabinet he left one door wide open, and did not either sit down, or invite his son to be seated, but at once began pacing up and down. He felt instinctively that it was a question of some serious affair, and matters like that are much more easily handled in motion. Besides that, he could the more conveniently hide the expression of his face, and again, if a discussion threatened to proceed to unpleasant lengths he could the more easily cut it short.

"I have gambled away State money, papa," said Peter, breaking off short and almost without thinking.

Porphyrius answered not a word, but his lips trembled. Then he began, as was his wont, to whisper to himself.

"I have gambled away three thousand roubles, and if I don't replace them by the day after to-morrow, the most serious consequences will follow for me."

"Well, procure the money, then," answered Porphyrius amiably.

Father and son made a few more turns in silence round the room. Peter wanted to vouchsafe further explanations, but he felt as if some one were stifling him.

"Where shall I get the money from?" he said at length.

"I certainly know of no such source, dearest friend; but the source that you had in mind when you gambled away the money—out of that source pay the money——"

"You know perfectly well that in such circumstances one has no thought of sources."

"I know nothing of the sort, my friend. I was never a gambler—it may be that I play a little with maminka in order to distract the old lady. But please don't trouble me with such dirty affairs, but come and let us have some tea."

Porphyrius turned towards the door, but Peter held him back.

"Allow me," he said; "I must in some way or other get out of this affair!"

Porphyrius smiled and looked him in the face.

"Certainly, my dear!" he nodded.

"Well, help me!"

"Ah, that's another matter! It is necessary, as you quite rightly observe, to get out of this mess; but how?—that's not my affair."

"But why will you not help me?"

"Why? In the first place, because I do not possess money for the purpose of hushing up a pitiable transgression, and in the second place, because the affair has nothing to do with me. It is you who have involved yourself; now extricate yourself!"

"I know, I know. You were never at a loss for words."

"Stop. Cease making insolent remarks! I am always willing to be agreeable to you. But—pardon me, dear son. I have no money for a criminal act!"

"I am your last son," said Peter. "Don't forget that——"

"Job, my son, lost all at the hands of God, but he did not grumble; he merely said: 'God has given, God has taken away; the will of the Lord be done!'"

"Listen to me, for the last time. I entreat you if you have a spark of feeling in you——"

"No, no, no; we'll talk no more about it. Let us go to the dining-room."

He almost ran to the door.

"Don't go from me; don't go. I shall not survive this conversation!" Peter called after him: "It'll be all the worse if we speak before witnesses!"

Porphyrius turned and stared at his son.

"What do you demand of me, depraved one? Speak!"

"You must pay the money for me!"

"Never."

"That is your final word?"

"Do you see that?" cried Porphyrius solemnly, pointing with his thumb at the holy image. "That is the paternal blessing," and with decisive step he left the room.

"Murderer!" sounded after his retreating form.

* * * *

Arina was already sitting at the table, and Eupraxia was preparing the tea. Since Peter had begged her for the money, and awakened in her the recollection of the curse, a perplexing agitation seized her, and continually the question rose up in her mind: "And how, if I should curse him?" She had heard that some discussion was going on in the cabinet, and turning to Eupraxia, said:

"Do go, dear child, and see if you can hear what they are saying."

Eupraxia returned, saying that they were not

talking loudly enough for her to hear what was said.

"Yes," she thought to herself when the two came out of the cabinet, and Porphyrius cut short Peter's answers, "that is how he treated me once, but I did not then understand."

At last both father and son came into the dining-room. Peter looked very red and was breathing heavily, his eyes were staring and his hair seemed to be standing on end ; his forehead was as if sown with clear pearls of sweat. Porphyrius was pale and agitated. He wanted to appear cool, but he did not possess the necessary strength, and his underlip trembled. For some time after they had sat down Porphyrius passed remarks about the weather, his son measuring him up and down with a look of contemptuous irony. No one answered Porphyrius' gushing allusions to the "Angel of God who had made the weather calm and bright" for their guest.

It cost Peter a great effort to stop himself from bursting out into laughter. Arina stared into her cup in silence, while Eupraxia drank noisily, blowing and puffing at the hot beverage.

"If Peter is not in a great hurry," observed Porphyrius, "he can leave quite easily in the evening for the railway station."

Peter rocked in his chair and fixedly regarded his father.

"Why do you stare at me so?" asked the latter. "Do you see anything very peculiar about me?"

"I look and wait to see what you are going to do!"

"You need not. As I have said, so must it be."

There followed the earlier silence once more, in the course of which a sound was suddenly audible :

" Porphyrius——"

The latter had doubtless heard the call, but he behaved as if it had no reference to him.

" Oh, children, children ! " he cried out. " They leave their parents, returning to the circles of their friends who are dearer to them than father and mother. But there is nothing to be done. They are of course young folk, and naturally like companions of their own age. Thy will be done, O Lord."

" Murderer ! " murmured Peter again, but so audibly that Arina looked at him in terror. Before her eyes suddenly hovered something like the shade of poor Stépane.

" To whom do you say that ? " asked Porphyrius, trembling with agitation.

" Only to one can it refer."

" God knows what is in your mind. Is it possible that you can do such an honour to anyone present ? "

Deep silence prevailed ; the glasses stood untouched. Porphyrius leant back and began to rock nervously in his chair. Peter, who saw that all hope was gone, felt a kind of foreboding of death, and under the influence of that feeling he was capable of proceeding to extreme limits. Father and son looked each other in the eyes with an inexplicable smile.

" Would you not rather leave in peace ? " said Porphyrius at last.

" I am departing immediately."

" Why do you wait, then ? I see that you are seeking a quarrel. But I do not like quarrelling with anyone. We are living here calmly and peacefully, without strife and contention—why have you really come here ? "

" I have told you ! "

" Your pains have been in vain. Leave quietly,

my dear ! Here ! Have the young master's carriage got ready ! Have some caviare——”

“ No ! I do not go yet ! First I will go into the church and ask for a mass for God's dead knave, Vladimir ! ”

“ For the suicide, that is——”

“ No, for the murdered ! ”

Father and son measured each other with a stare, then both sprang up almost simultaneously.

“ Unheard of ! ” exclaimed Porphyrius in a broken voice. “ Unheard of ! ”

“ For the murdered ! ” repeated Peter roughly.

“ Who has killed him ? ” demanded Porphyrius, obviously expecting his son to regain his senses.

But Peter, beside himself, foamed with anger, crying,

“ You——”

“ I ? ”

Porphyrius, turning towards the holy image, began to pray.

“ You, you, you ! ” repeated Peter.

“ There, thank God, I feel better now that I have prayed ! ” said Porphyrius. “ So, then, in your opinion, I caused Vladimir's death ? ”

“ Yes, you ! ”

“ Well, according to mine, I did not ! I mean, he shot himself. He was then in Petersburg. I was here in Golovlevo ! How could I kill him at a distance of seven hundred versts ? ”

“ As if you did not know exactly ? ”

“ I don't know, as God is my Witness ! ”

“ But who was it left Vladimir without a kopeck ? Who ? Who cut short his allowance ? ”

“ H'm, h'm. Why did he marry against the wish of his father.”

“ He had not your permission ? ”

“ Whose ? Mine ? Never ! ”

"Oh, yes, you act according to your kind. With you every word has a dozen meanings."

"I never gave him my permission! He wrote: 'I want to marry Lidotchka, papa.' That means: 'I will,' but not 'I ask your permission.' I answered: 'If you want to marry, marry, I can't hinder that'—that was all."

"All! Wasn't that permission?"

"What did I say? I said: 'If you want to marry, marry, my friend, either Lidotchka or another—I can't hinder it!'"

"You could leave him without his daily bread! If you had said, 'On my pecuniary assistance you need not further rely,' that at least would have been a clearer answer."

"No, I never permit myself to do that—to obtain anything from a son of full age through threats—never! My rule is never to hinder. I never mix myself up in other people's affairs. I do not do so myself, and don't desire others to interfere in my affairs. Most certainly, I forbid such interference! Do you hear that, ruffian, man of no respect—I forbid it."

"Never mind about 'forbid'! Can't you stop your mouth up against all that twaddle?"

"If he had only repented! or said, 'I ask pardon, dearest papa, for having injured you!—'"

"Oh, out upon you!"

With these words Peter ceased rocking his chair, and leant both his arms on the table.

"And now myself, too!" His voice was hardly audible, and his features seemed to become more and more distorted. "And now myself, too," he repeated with convulsive sobs.

"Who is the guilty one—?"

Porphyrius could not finish, for something unexpected was happening. Arina had not been a mere passive listener at this family scene. Some-

thing unusual was working in her, and it was apparent that the moment had come in which before her spiritual vision she plainly saw in all their clearness and naturalness the events of her own life. Her face assumed a vivacious expression, her eyes sparkled, and her lips trembled as if she wanted to say something but could not. At the moment when Peter uttered his last sobbing sentences, she rose heavily from her chair, stretched both hands before her, and from her breast rang out the words : “ I—curse—you ! ”

IV.

THE NIECES.

PORPHYRIUS gave Peter no money. He put comforts in the shape of pasties in the carriage, and personally accompanied the carriage to the station to see that his feet were warmly covered. As he said, he had done everything that it behoved him to do out of relationship.

Life in Golovlevo went on again as before, in leisured haste and interminable chatter about trifles.

Contrary to expectation, Porphyrius bore his mother's curse more or less passively, and did not yield a hair's breadth from the resolves which, so to speak, were always in his brain. But when he turned to his mother and said, "Maminka, the Lord be with you ! Calm yourself ! God is kind !" these words were not so much an expression of anxiety for his mother as for himself. His mother's proceeding was so unexpected that he did not think it fitting to appear frightened. He really feared the curse of his mother, but had pictured to himself something very different from this. His mind conjured up the vision of his mother standing frightful in the middle of the room, with holy images and burning candles round her, and with a pale face crying out her curse on him. This was to be followed by thunder and lightning, the curtain would be rent asunder and darkness would cover the

earth, while above, the angry face of Jehovah, illuminated by lightning, would appear in the clouds.

He sought in all manner of ways to soften his dear maminka.

"She is not so well, the old lady, while she locks herself away from all!" he said to himself. "She sits and plays cards, and then suddenly falls asleep."

Justice demands the statement that the weakness of Arina caused him some inquietude.

"She has a sound constitution," he reflected. "She does not waste her property, how indeed should she? If she thinks of us, we shall secure a fine capital. But ought she to give nothing to the orphans? She will give them nothing!"

The catastrophe came, however, more quickly than he had expected. On the day after Peter had left, Arina went back to Pogorelka. She was destined never to return to Golovlevo.

One morning she was about to get up as usual, but could not. She felt no particular pain, and had not excited herself; but she could not stand up. This, however, in no way troubled her; she felt in a peaceful frame of mind. Aphimiushka, becoming anxious, sent a messenger to Porphyrius. The latter appeared on the following day.

Arina lay outstretched and with open mouth, breathing heavily on the bed. Her eyes were staring; one arm hung limply along the hareskin coverlet.

The curtains were drawn to, and darkness prevailed in the room, only one lamp burning with a flickering flame. The air was thick and moist; the fumes from the much-heated stove, the smoke from the lamp and the various other exhalations, made the air unendurable. Porphyrius appeared in fur-lined shoes, and softly as a snake glided to the bed of Arina, whose broad and strong frame was peculiarly compressed and shrunken, as if

she had uncovered herself in the darkness. Her eyes followed Porphyrius neither in fear nor in wonder.

"It is I, maminka," he said. "How are you to-day? Ah! I have not been able to sleep this night for anxiety. I was just thinking what my friends in Pogorelka would be doing. So I got up, a sledge was got ready, two horses being harnessed, and—here I am." He chuckled genially, but Arina, making no reply, crouched more and more into the bed clothes.

"Now God is kind, maminka," he went on, "above all you must not excite yourself. Stand up, and come into the sitting-room with your youthful son—thus!"

Porphyrius rose from his chair and demonstrated how youthful sons walk into the sitting-room.

"See," he said, "I have brought with me some holy water! You must drink some of it."

Porphyrius took from his pocket a small glass, poured some of the water into a receptacle, and extended it towards the invalid. Arina made a gesture as if she wanted to raise her head, but could no longer do so.

"If the orphans—" she groaned.

"The orphans are bound to turn up! Ah! maminka—a trifling illness and all your courage gone! But all will turn out all right. I will have the orphans told by messenger; but one thing at a time; there is no such great necessity for hurry; we shall remain a long time together. The summer is beginning, and we shall gather mushrooms together—"

"The orphans," repeated Arina in great distress.

"They will come. Only give me time—we will call all, and they will appear. We will all sit round in a circle; you will be the hen and we the chicks.

But, of course, this is all joking on your part ; you must set a good example to others."

But whatever efforts Porphyrius made by jokes and liveliness to comfort his dear maminka, her strength hourly waned. The doctor was sent for, and, as the invalid continued to ask for the orphans, Porphyrius himself wrote a letter to Anninka and Lubinka, wherein he compared their conduct with his own, called himself a Christian, and them—ungrateful hussies. In the night the doctor came, but he was too late. Arina had not another day to live ; at four in the morning the agony of death invaded her, and two hours later Porphyrius was on his knees wailing :

" Maminka ! Dearest ! Give me your blessing !" But Arina Pétrovna heard no longer ; her wide-open eyes looked darkly into the void as if trying in vain to comprehend something.

Porphyrius could not calm himself. He refused to understand that the open grave before his eyes was tearing away from him the last bond which still linked him with the living world, was depriving him of the last being through whom he could emancipate himself from the dross which would at length stifle him.

After the burial of his mother, Porphyrius set about inquiring into her circumstances. In looking through her papers he found ten different testaments (in one of which he was called "the depraved"), but they were all written at a time when Arina was absolute administrator, and they were nothing more than rough drafts. Porphyrius was very pleased to find he had nothing to fear on the score of the formalities of succession, for he was the only lawful heir of his mother. The estate of his mother consisted of a capital of fifteen thousand roubles and some personalty ; included in the latter was the tarantass which had been an apple

of discord between them. She had carefully kept distinct the accounts of her own estate and that of which she was only trustee for the orphans. Porphyrius, having duly proved that he was the heir, sealed the papers relating to the guardianship of the orphans' estate, and had the tarantass and two cows, designated "mine" in the will, brought to Golovlevo. After holding mass, he returned to his own place.

Porphyrius had only rarely any tidings of the fate of his son. Papers he never read, nor ever wrote or received letters, and hence he could acquire no knowledge of the progress of the trial in which Peter was the principal figure. Indeed, he had no wish to hear anything of the whole business. He was a man who avoided any unpleasantness as much as possible, who was absorbed up to his ears in the mire of a pitiable self-esteem, and whose whole being in consequence left behind it not a trace of its path. Men like him, and there are many, know no bond of friendship, for the simple reason that the existence of friendship depends on that of interests in common. Thirty years had Porphyrius Vladimiritch served in a government office; then, one fine morning he vanished—and not a soul missed him.

All he heard of the fate of Peter was through servants, but he acted as if he knew nothing whatever, and when once Eupraxia hesitatingly began talking of Peter, he made a deprecatory motion with his hand and said:

"No, no, no; I know nothing, have heard nothing, and don't want to hear anything! I don't want to be mixed up in such dirty matters."

Then at last came a letter from Peter, in which the latter informed him that he had to leave for a remote province, and asked his father if he would

grant him means in his present condition. Porphyrius, in answer, wrote :

" CRIMINAL SON, PETER !

" As a faithful subject obedient to the law, I really ought not to answer your letter at all, but as a father who is not even free from human weakness, I cannot deny to my own child, from mere compassion, some well-meaning advice. My opinion of the whole affair is briefly this : your punishment is heavy, but fully merited—this is the first and chief thought which ought to hover before you on your new path. You must give up all your past pleasures and the memory of them, for they can only embitter you and lead to grumbling. Don't complain about your sentence, for the authorities do not punish you, they merely give you the means of atonement. Ceaselessly think of obliterating past faults—and not of the luxury of former times. Even I, who have never stood before a court, know no luxury ! Follow this advice of a matured understanding, and begin a new life. I, for my part, will pray to the Giver of all Grace, that He may send you steadiness and peace. On this very day I have been to church and wept hot tears. Now, with my blessing to you on your new path, I remain,

" Your deeply provoked but yet ever-loving father,

" PORPHYRIUS VLADIMIRITCH."

Whether Peter received this letter is not known, but a month after its despatch Porphyrius received an official document telling him that his son had not arrived at the place of exile, but had been taken ill on the way and died.

At Lent, while the theatres were closed, Anninka put in an appearance at Golovlevo. She said Lubinka could not accompany her because her contract extended through Lent, and she had to perform at Romny Isjum and Krementschny.

In the course of her short career Anninka had developed considerably. No longer was she the naive, modest, lazy young woman who moved her head somewhat awkwardly in Dubrovino and Pogorelka, and softly hummed tunes to herself as she roamed from room to room, trying apparently to find somewhere to sit down. She was now a girl of free, unrestrained manners, and anyone at a glance could see that she did not "hide her words in her pocket." She had altered outwardly: before Porphyrius now stood a stately woman with slightly rouged classical features, high and broad bust, and wonderfully beautiful braids of hair which hung heavily on her neck; she was indeed "the beautiful Helen," who knew how to make her cavaliers stare breathlessly at her. Arriving early in the morning at Golovlevo, she had her own special room at once made ready for her, from which she appeared later in a magnificent dress of heavy silk, the train of which she deftly steered between the chairs. Although Porphyrius loved his God above all, that did not affect his preference for the beautiful, and especially for beautiful women. So he blessed Anninka and then kissed her on both cheeks, availing himself of the opportunity to cast a glance at her bosom, whereat Anninka began almost imperceptibly to smile.

"Ah, uncle, how boring it is here!" she observed, yawning slightly.

"You haven't looked around—it only seems boring. Perhaps, later, it will be very pleasant here," replied Porphyrius, his eyes suddenly lighting up with an oily glitter.

"What have you got here? Snow all round, and not a neighbour—any of the military here?"

"Yes, and neighbours, too, but they don't interest me. Besides if—"

Porphyrius looked at her, but did not finish. He probably only wanted to excite her woman's curiosity, but on her features he again observed the scarcely perceptible smile. She looked very boldly at Eupraxia, who, suddenly reddening, set to work to clean the glasses, furtively casting great staring eyes at Anninka.

"This is my new housekeeper—a very faithful girl," said Porphyrius.

Anninka hardly moved her head, and began humming lightly :

*"Ah, ah, que j'aime, que j'aime, que j'aime,
Que j'aime les mili-mili-militaires!"*

Porphyrius dropped his eyes and quietly stirred his tea.

"Oh, this boresomeness!" Anninka yawned again.

"Wait a little. We will have the sledges made ready—and then you can travel to your heart's content!"

"Uncle, why did not you join the cavalry?"

"Because, child, God decides beforehand each man's vocation. One will become a cavalryman—another an official—"

"Yes, yes, and a third, fourth and fifth—but I've forgotten it all. And God decides all that, doesn't He?"

"What, God! You mustn't smile about Him. You know it is written that—"

"Oh, yes, fusty old story! The whole world wears chignons now. But here, the watchword is 'Beware.' Look, uncle, what extraordinary plaits I have!"

Porphyrius approached almost on tip-toe, and took her plaits in his hand.

Eupraxia took a step forward, chewing a lump of sugar.

"A chignon?"

"No, no. My own hair. I'll undo it and show you."

"Yes, a fine plait!" said Porphyrius, while he opened his lips as if before something unclean, adding, "the wanton child; so out of hand! Knots and braided hair—according to her fancy, but of the principal thing she hasn't spoken a word!"

"Ah, about grandmamma? She is dead, then?"

"She has departed from us, my child!—in peace. A blessed ending was granted to her. It was all so calm! She had scarcely uttered her last words when she began to rattle, once, twice, thrice—we looked, but she was no more!"

Porphyrius rose, went to the holy image, and prayed. Tears even ran from his eyes, so well had he lied.

And Anninka? She was certainly not a sentimental person. Her thoughts were already following another channel.

"Do you know, uncle, when she fed me and sister on sour milk? Not latterly; she got better later; but earlier, when she was still rich?"

"Ah, why rake up old stories! Will you not go and see her grave?"

"Yes. Let us go, please."

"Yes, but first cleanse yourself."

"How cleanse?"

"Come now, do you imagine your grandmother liked you to become an actress? We will, before going to the grave, have something to eat prepared, and then you must cleanse yourself. To-morrow, early, I shall arrange a mass, and then with God——!"

Anninka changed at once. In burning anger she narrowed her brows, and in decisive tones said :

" No ! I go as I am ! And at once ! "

" I should advise you to wait until to-morrow. We will then harness the horses to a kibitka. You should cleanse——"

" Uncle, you are yet a simpleton ! God only knows what twaddle you are talking ! "

" It does not please you ? If the truth is unpleasant at times, even bitter, people must listen to it all the same simply because it is the truth. You are living here with us and on us, and you will see how much better it is here than strumming on the guitar from fair to fair ! "

" God pardon you, uncle, for what you are saying. Strumming on the guitar ! "

" Well, with something similar, the tambourine. You have just insulted me by calling me a simpleton, an old man like me—and therefore I have a right to retaliate ! "

" Good, you may well have the right—as to that we won't say anything more. Tell me, please, whom grandmamma has left behind her as her heir."

" Only the lawful heir comes into the question here."

" You, of course ! So much the better ! She was buried here in Golovlevo ? "

" No, in Pogorelka. It was her own wish."

" Good, then I will go. Can one borrow horses from you ? "

" Why borrow ? You have your own horses, and are no stranger here. You come as niece," said Porphyrius with zeal, while a smile " for relationship's sake " hovered over his features. " A kibitka, a pair of horses. We will look at this and that, and converse on different things ? "

" No, I will go alone. What need have I of you ? There is still another matter. Peter is dead ? "

"He is dead, poor fellow. He was constantly irreverent towards his father, and God has punished him for it. We have no right—even you have not—to wish to alter what God causes to happen."

"A reasonable work we don't alter. But I should think, uncle, life must be frightful for you!"

"Frightful? See what blessings surround me!" He indicated the holy images. "Here a blessing, in the cabinet a blessing, and in the bedroom is my paradise."

"But you are absolutely alone—frightful!"

"What have I to fear? By day it is clear, and at night lamps burn in every room. From the dark streets one would think I was holding a ball. And what sort of ball? Divine helpers and friends around me—that is my ball—"

"Peter wrote to us before his death."

"As a relative? God be praised that he had not lost the feelings of a kinsman."

"He wrote after judgment was pronounced, saying he had gambled away three thousand roubles, and that you had not given him the money. You, uncle, such a rich man!"

"It is easy to count the money in other people's pockets. At times it seems as if a particular person possessed mountains of gold, but on investigation it will be found scarcely sufficient for butter and candles—and even so, it belongs to God!"

"H'm. We are somewhat richer than you, then! We collected and got our cavaliers to support us, and ultimately we sent him six hundred roubles!"

"What are cavaliers?"

"Ah, uncle, we are, of course, only actresses, and you yourself proposed that we should 'cleanse' ourselves!"

"I don't like you to speak so."

"Whether you do or don't, it cannot be altered ; that is your own opinion, isn't it ? It is God's will !"

"Mock not ! Say anything you like, but I will not permit you to mock. Where did you send the money to ?"

"I forget—some little town or other—he indicated it himself."

"I know nothing of it. If there were any money, I ought to have received it after his death. He surely can't have squandered it all at once ? The convoy guards must have taken it !"

"We shall certainly not see it again—the matter stands as I have narrated it. But at the same time, it is a frightful business ; that it should even be possible that a man can be wrecked for a mere three thousand roubles."

"It was not on account of three thousand roubles ! It only appears to be so."

Porphyrius had become agitated, and was about to launch out into an explanation of God's invisible ways, but Anninka yawned unrestrainedly, and said :

"Uncle, what boredom rules all round you !"

This time Porphyrius was really angered, and held his tongue. For a long while they both walked up and down the dining-room, Anninka yawning, and Porphyrius crossing himself in every corner. At length a servant gave word that the equipage was ready, and at once began the usual comedy of the etiquette among relatives. Porphyrius kissed Anninka, calling out :

"Wrap her feet up well ! Let nothing be forgotten."



Anninka was now alone at the grave of her

grandmother, and herself had a mass read. When the choir began to sing she wept bitterly.

The place of the ceremony was a mournful one. The church in which Arina had been laid to rest belonged to the poorest. The fabric had worn away in many places, leaving the red tiles showing through. The bell tinkled feebly and dully, and the priest's garb was old and bad. Deep snow covered the roof so that men with shovels had to dig a way to the grave. There was no memorial stone. Nothing but a plain white cross on which not the slightest information appeared. The churchyard lay secluded and away from the village. Not far from the church were the cottages of the "pope" and his servants, but all around extended a desolate snow-covered level tract of country, relieved here and there by gigantic heaps of snow. A sharp March wind whistled over the churchyard, and the vestments of the pope and his assistants fluttered high in the draught.

After the mass Anninka went with the worthy father to his cottage, and chatted over tea with his old wife. "Pallid death stared everything in the face," she thought, and wept again.

In Pogorelka no room was warmed for Anninka, for they had had no warning of her arrival. Without removing her fur-lined coat, she walked through all the rooms, pausing for a while in her grandmother's bedroom and prayer-room. The floor of the bedroom had not been swept, and thick dust covered everything in the room. Anninka sat in her grandmother's easy-chair, and fell into a reverie. At first rose up recollections of earlier times, but they were transitory and fleeting; thoughts of the present were far more sharply outlined.

Although Pogorelka had long seemed too lonely a place, yet now her heart felt a burning desire to

be able to live in this peaceful place, in which nothing excited one's curiosity and everything was so still that the world all round seemed to have become a desert. What, on the other hand, could she expect from her nomad life—that life to which she was bound to return? She thought of the evil-smelling inns, the eternal hubbub which came from dining-hall and billiard-room; the unkempt and dirty waiters; the rehearsals on gloomy boards, between painted canvas side-scenes, by contact with which one got dirty in draughts and dampness. And then there were the officers and advocates with their cynical talk, their streams of wine, clouds of cigar-smoke, and hubbub, hubbub, nothing but hubbub! And what did she talk about with them? With what cynicism did they approach her! Especially that man with the great moustache, and voice hoarse from over-drinking, and the eternal reek of stables about him—Ah! what did he say to her! Anninka trembled at the recollection and closed her eyes. Then things became clearer to her mind, and she repaired to the praying-room. In the cupboard stood only a few holy images, which had belonged to her grandmother, others, which had been given by Porphyrius, having been taken away again to Golovlevo. Even the lamps had been taken away.

"They even wanted to take the cupboard away, saying it was a gift from the mistress!" said Aphimiushka.

"How, indeed? But tell me, Aphimiushka, of grandma's last illness.

"There were no external symptoms. She spoke no blessing; but asked twice after you and your sister."

"Has Porphyrius taken away the holy images?"

"Yes. He said they were his mother's property. Also the tarantass and two cows, which he said

belonged to maminka. He wanted also to take a horse, but Fiodulitch said, 'That is ours.' It is an old property of Pogorelka.' And that frightened him, and he left it where it was."

Anninka went outside. In the midst of a mountain of filth stood the "converted capital"—twenty head of skinny cows and three horses. She called for bread, and gave to each animal a piece. The cowherd hereupon invited her mistress to enter her hut, in the corner of which, by the stove, was a newly-born calf. Anninka ran to the little animal and kissed it on the snout. Afterwards she took three gold pieces from her purse, distributed the money among the old servants, and then made arrangements for her departure.

"What will you do now?" she asked, mounting the kibitka, of Fiodulitch who had followed his mistress.

"What should we do? We shall go on living here," replied the latter simply.

Anninka grew sad. There was an apparent ring of irony in his words. She sighed and said :

"Well, good-bye!"

"But we hope that you will return to us to stay," added Fiodulitch.

"No; wherefore? It is a matter of complete indifference. Farewell."

And again the tears started to her eyes, and they all wept together. How strange it all was, too; there seemed to be nothing to chain her here—no recollections even—and yet she wept.

"Good luck to you!" echoed in her ears as her sleigh went off.

As she came by the churchyard again, she stopped and betook herself once more through the cleared snow to the hill. Twilight was beginning, and in the houses of the priest and his assistants lights

were already burning. Anninka stood with one hand on the grave-cross. She shed no tears ; no definite thought prevailed in her mind, and she could give no permanent form to her reflections ; but she felt so bitter in heart, so bitter about her whole existence. She was not out of humour either with her grandmother or herself ; and as all-unconsciously dreaming a quarter of an hour passed away, there suddenly came before her mind's eye the vision of Lubinka, perhaps at Kremetschny, coming forward as a nightingale with her lusty troupe :

*" Ah, que j'aime, que j'aime, que j'aime,
Que j'aime les mili—mili—militaires ! "*

She broke down. Hurriedly she fled back to her sleigh and returned to Golovlevo as fast as possible.

* * * * *

After her return to her uncle, Anninka was monosyllabic and quiet. Of course, Porphyrius lost no time in opening conversation.

" Did you have a mass said at the grave ? "

" Yes."

" The singers were there ? They sang the 'Eternal Memory' ? "

" Yes."

" She was a worthy old woman and our mother."

He rose from his chair, turned his face to the holy images, and prayed.

" And how were things in Pogorelka ? All right ? "

" I don't now ; everything seemed to be in its place."

" So, so, ' seemed.' Things always ' seem ' to us ; but we will see all about it. It is a very nice property that you have, the dead maminka ad-

ministered it splendidly, and spent not a little out of her own means on it."

Anninka could not abstain from deriding her tender uncle.

"Why did you take two cows away from Pogorelka, uncle?" she asked.

"Cows? How so? Tshernavka and Privedionka perhaps? Those, my child, belonged to my mother."

"And you are their lawful heir!—Would you like me to have the calf sent to you?"

"There, you are getting into a rage again. But speak out: to whom did the cows belong in your opinion?"

"I only know that they have been stalled in Pogorelka."

"And I know that I have proofs that they belonged to maminka! I have looked through an inventory which she drew up and therein she expressly says 'mine.'"

"Well, let us leave the subject; it isn't seemly to talk about it."

"In Pogorelka there is also a horse—the old brown one. I can't say whether it really belonged to maminka or not; and what I don't know about I will not fight about."

"Oh, drop the subject, uncle."

"No; why drop it? I am an open man, and like everything above board."

"You even took the holy images away?" Anninka felt compelled to remark.

"Indeed; they belonged to me as lawful heir."

"The whole cupboard is now full of gaps!"

"How can I help it? You can pray all the same. It is your prayers, not the cupboard, that is necessary to God."

Nonetheless Porphyrius rose and thanked God that he had good holy images.

"Tell me what we have to do respecting the inheritance?" asked Anninka.

"Oh, wait. First, rest a bit, and get some sleep. We will confer over it, and see what is to be done—two together will surely find out the right thing to do."

"We are of full age, I believe?"

"Oh, yes. You can dispose of your own property as you choose."

"God be praised that that is so."

"I have the honour to wish you happiness." Porphyrius stood up and went to her to kiss her.

"Ah, uncle, how strange you are! You are always kissing!"

"Why shouldn't I? You are my niece—and I do so for relationship's sake!"

"Tell me, what I have to do regarding the inheritance? We shall have to travel to the town and have a lot of trouble there."

"Yes, we shall have business to do in the town; but all in good time! You are, thank God, not in an inn, but with your uncle. Eat and drink; you have as much as you want, and if any particular dish doesn't please you—well, ask for another! Ask away! Get Eupraxia to help you!"

Eupraxia, who was holding a glass of hot tea before her mouth, stuck her nose assertively in the air.

"See, we have even got sucking pigs; have all your heart desires!"

Porphyrius had again approached Anninka, and tapped her "for relationship's sake" on the knee. In so doing, apparently without noticing it, he allowed his hand to lie there for a while so that the orphan instinctively drew back.

"I must soon be returning," she said.

"Let us undertake our deliberations and then travel. But not over-much haste. Haste is only

necessary when there is a fire. But there's no fire here, thank God. And now I should like to ask you this : Do you want to stay in Pogorelka ? "

" No ; under no circumstances."

" Live with me, then. We will live here together, just as we are here now."

With these words he looked at her with such a melting look that Anninka became quite uneasy.

" No, uncle, I will not. It is too boring here."

" Ah, silly, silly ! Boring, and again, boring—but in what respect—that you don't say ! Those who have something to do, my child, who have to manage their property, know no tedium. Look at myself, for example : on work-days I am concerned with my household affairs. During festivals we go to church. Live here with us, and you would soon find some occupation, and if not, you could sit and play cards with Eupraxia, or—"

" No, uncle, your proposals are in vain ! "

" You would live here very well."

" No ; but I should like to make one observation. I am tired from my journey. Can't I go and get some sleep ? "

" Christ be with you ! But do think how much better it would be to live in Golovlevo with us."

* * * * *

Anninka passed a very troubled night. The psychic disturbance, which had so mastered her in Pogorelka, raged in her still with undiminished force.

There are moments in which a person who hitherto has not in the peculiar sense of the expression become a person "of the world," suddenly begins to realise that he not only in fact lives, but that his life is even sickening with a moral evil. Whence it has arisen and how long he has

suffered from it will not in the majority of cases be self-evident, and most often he will not seek the foundation of the evil in just those causes which are its real conditions.

Anninka was not one of those who, in the recognition of their faults, see a path to the amelioration of their mode of life, and yet, as a clever girl, she understood perfectly well that even by comparison with the wretched cares about daily bread which had appealed to her as the point of departure from her sojourn at Pogorelka, even the position of a provincial actress in which she found herself, could only involve her certain ruin. Instead of a calm life full of work, she found it a stormy activity full of endless twaddle, naked cynicism, and trite whims, all leading nowhere. How often had she conjured up the recollection of herself in Pogorelka as a very serious young woman, while she laboured and hungered at her education, filled with the firm resolve to endure distress and want for the sake of youth (true it is that the idea "youth" possesses a definite limit), but scarcely had she trod the broad road of self-dependence than she acquired, completely by her own efforts, a living which at one blow hurled all her dreams in the dust.

Her temperament was by no means passionate, but she easily got excited; the material which her education had lent her, and with which she undertook to tread a life full of effort and trouble, was so frail that she could not find in it the foundation for a permanent vocation. Her education was that of a so-called operatic institute, in which everything was in a jumble—a composition on a 'Host of Flying Geese,' 'Caprice,' the 'Rape of the Beautiful Helen,' with an 'Ode to Felicia,' or, to go to the opposite extreme, on the 'Sentiment of Gratitude towards one's Teachers and Guardians of a

'Well-educated Young Girl.' In this wilderness of disorder, one sought in vain for some starting point. And it was not the love of work which was awakened thereby, but rather a taste for the worldly, the wish to be surrounded by cavaliers, and to listen to their gallantries, and generally to hurl oneself into the whirlpool and glamour of the so-called world.

The life of an actress now disgusted her. Alone, without friendly assistance or any conscious purpose, with a temperament which thirsted after the noisy activity of the world glamour and fame, she saw herself quickly surrounded by a chaos in which thronged a mass of persons, one emerging behind another. They were people of the most diverse character, so that the motive or impulse directing her advance towards this one or that one could not be the same. In many cases, she associated with some one or other circle of acquaintances without there being any motive for so doing at all. Her life was now in a certain measure a wandering house, the doors of which were open to anyone who was young, of gay disposition, and possessed of the necessary means of life.

She did not select her circle of acquaintances according to any definite principles ; she surrounded herself with the most varied company merely for the sake of avoiding loneliness. "Holy Art," that a Moscow student had spoken of to her, was long buried, and her understanding was so confused that she had no perception of art at all. She no longer saw the dirty corridor faces, the greasy decorations ; no longer heard the noise or heeded the evil reek of taverns. She now heard the cynical speech of her admirers, and could do nothing to shake it off. She no longer saw that between her and other girls, who had welcomed a certain mode of livelihood, there existed an extraordinary dif-

ference. In that state had she undertaken the journey to Golovlevo.

One thought had constantly tormented her from the early morning until her arrival. As a girl of yielding nature she was very receptive of impressions, and no less quickly could alter her plans. She felt herself on her arrival in Pogorelka to be a person of rank. She was conscious that she possessed property, had her own house and home, and she yearned to see again the old district and to breathe again the air from which she had taken so speedy a departure. But this frame of mind forsook her after contact with realities in Golovlevo. The sinister eyes of Porphyrius gazing at her bust offended her, and she recollects that behind that bust lay a treasure which was not lightly to be esteemed. And when now she recalled the incidents of the day—the artless questions of the servants in Pogorelka, the edifying prayers of the priest and his wife, Porphyrius' reprimands and corrections of herself—it was obvious to her that the quondam "lady" in her was dead for ever, that from now henceforth she was the actress of a provincial theatre, and that the condition of a Russian actress approaches very closely to that of a wanton woman.

She had hitherto lived as if in sleep. She had surrendered herself in the *Beautiful Helen*, exhibited herself as drunk in *Perigole*; sunk to the most unrestrained things in the *Duchess of Gerolstein*. She really had not been conscious of what she was doing. All her efforts were directed to making herself and her whole performance "chic," and at the same time to pleasing the officers of the regiment quartered in the town. The officers lent the "tony" element to the little place, and she knew that it depended on them whether she gave pleasure or not. They came into the

corridors, appeared in her apartment without making any bones about it even when she was only half-dressed, and called her soft names—and she saw it all as if it were an empty formality, an unavoidable circumstance of her profession. But her body and soul she had not yet made public property, and just now, when she felt herself the "lady," the thought of her mode of living filled her with loathing.

But whither escape? Where throw off the burden from her shoulders? She could find no answer. Doubtless it was only a dream; but her earlier life had also been a dream, and her present awakening—that also was only a dream! Ah! a life full of work! What a fine thing it is! But in such a world only strong men live—some because in the recognition of the value and essence of work they find a certain satisfaction; others, because work is the first obvious duty, and hence becomes for them a habit.

It never came into Anninka's mind to begin a new life in Pogorelka or Golovlevo; in this connection she derived considerable support from the sphere in which she was placed by force of circumstances and which she certainly had not renounced. She had made arrangements for her leave of absence and the duration thereof, as also the date of her departure from Golovlevo. She determined to leave Golovlevo as quickly as possible, and, if her uncle should make any objection, she intended to offer the plea that she must without fail appear within a very short time.

On the following morning, after a good night's sleep, she walked through all the rooms of the spacious mansion of Golovlevo. Everything was empty, uninhabitable, and reeked of desolation and extinction. The thought of living in this house without definite aim, put her finally into a

state almost of fear. "At no price whatever!" she cried with a violence for which she could not account even to herself. "At no price whatever."

Porphyrius met her on the following day with his customary friendliness, the nature of which made it hard to say whether he only wanted to flatter or to suck blood.

"Come now, little Hurry, how did we sleep? Whither must it now be going?" he asked in a bantering voice.

"I am feeling anxious, uncle; I have only such a very short leave of absence that I must hasten away."

"Just in order to go and play the buffoon? I won't detain you."

"Whether you allow me or not I shall go—and alone."

Porphyrius sadly shook his head.

"And the blessed grandmamma, what would she have said?" he asked in a tone of friendly reproach.

"Grandmamma knew all about it in her lifetime. But what manner of picture of myself have you got in your mind, uncle? Yesterday, you sent me to the fair with a guitar; to-day, you talk of 'playing the buffoon.' Listen! I do not wish that you should speak in that way to me!"

"Eh, she is getting angry! But I love the truth! In my opinion, if right——"

"No, no! I will not, I will not have it! Neither Right nor Wrong, do I need from you! Do you hear? I have no wish that you should express yourself in that way to me!"

"Now, now, are you boiling up? Come, dragonfly, be so kind as to drink some tea with me! The samovar has long been humming and singing on the table——"

Porphyrius wanted to wipe out, by jokes and

smiles, the impression he had produced by the words "play the buffoon," and, as a sign of his conciliatory humour, bent down to his niece in order to seize her by the waist. But to Anninka this seemed so ill-bred and nauseous that she hastily turned away to avoid the expected attention.

"I repeat to you, uncle, in all seriousness, that I must make haste," she said.

"Well, then, come; we will first take tea and then chat."

"Why only *after* tea? Why can't one talk *at* tea?"

"Ah, why, why? Because one ought to do everything nicely and in due order. First one thing, and then the next; first we drink tea and chat, and then talk business."

It is best to accommodate oneself to rigmarole of that kind. They began drinking tea, and Porphyrius dragged out the time in his wearisome fashion; first he would take a sip from his cup, then cross himself, slap his thigh, or speak of departed grandmamma.

"Now, then, we will speak!" he said at last. "Have you thought of staying for longer as my guest?"

"Longer than a week I cannot stay. I must be present in Moscow."

"A week is a long time, dear child. Much can be done in a week, but little can be completed."

"We will, it is to be hoped, do much, then, uncle."

"You are in haste because you must be in Moscow, but why, if I may ask, do you not speak out about this journey? In my view, you would spend your time much more usefully on your affairs here than in Moscow."

"I must go without question to Moscow, as I want to try and find an engagement on the stage

there. As for our affairs here, you yourself say that much can be accomplished in a week."

"If we act as we ought to, all will go well and smoothly; if we don't, then the thing will be dragged out interminably."

"Well, then, give me your assistance, uncle."

"That's it. When it is necessary, it is 'give me your assistance, uncle,' and when it isn't necessary, it is all very tedious and boresome with uncle, and one must very soon depart. No thought of asking uncle: 'What do you think, dear uncle—may I go to Moscow'?"

"How strange you are, uncle. I must go to Moscow, in any case, and you say at once, that it won't do."

"I say it won't do—stay here! I don't speak as a stranger to you, but as your uncle—and one whom you can obey. Ah, my child, it is a good thing that you have an uncle who can take care of you and keep you. But strangers? Strangers don't trouble about anyone and only seek their own advantage."

Anninka would have liked to answer him, but she said to herself that it would only be pouring oil on the fire, and held her tongue. She sat and looked impatiently at the babbling Porphyrius Vladimiritch.

"And I've been wanting to say this to you for a long time," continued Porphyrius; "it does not please me that you should travel about to every fair you may choose."

"It is not saying much to say 'it pleases me not'; you must indicate a definite path."

"Live with me—there is your means of escape!"

"No—not for the world."

"How? What do you mean?"

"I mean that there is nothing for me to do here. What is there to do, living with you? Getting

up early in the morning ; then drinking tea ; after tea, we are thinking ‘now breakfast is coming’ ; and after that ‘the midday meal will soon be prepared’ ; after midday, more tea perhaps ; and then come supper and sleep. One would die here ! ”

“ But that is what everybody does ! There is nothing ridiculous, nothing objectionable here ; and if I—”

“ Nothing objectionable, no doubt, but it’s not the life for me ! ”

“ ‘ For me ’ or ‘ not for me,’ anyone can say that ; rather ought you to say ‘ with God,’ or ‘ not with God ! ’ If we in Golovlevo did not live according to God’s will, if we acted against Him, sinned and grumbled—we should merit the judgment of others. Oh, child ! how thoughtlessly you intend to act ! If I had said anything unfriendly to you, or acted badly towards you, or if you had had to put up with some insult from me—then, in God’s Name ! But God commands that people should accept advice from old age—if, now, I should approach too near to you—then grow angry with me ! But here I sit quite quietly and peacefully, saying nothing, and merely thinking how much better and more comfortable it would be here. But not a word do you reply to my friendly talk ! Speak not suddenly and all at once, my child, but reflect first and pray to God, and ask Him to enlighten you. And then, if—”

Porphyrius spoke for a long while without getting fatigued. The words followed one another like a great flood of slime. Anninka gazed at him in unconscious anxiety, thinking : Why doesn’t he choke ? Throughout all his chatter her uncle had not spoken about the business to be settled by reason of the death of Arina Pétrovna. After the midday meal she sought again to question

him on these matters, and then again in the evening, but Porphyrius always began to talk about something of purely secondary importance, so that Anninka was sorry she had spoken at all; and the thought rose in her—How will it end?

When, after the midday meal, Porphyrius withdrew to rest, Anninka remained alone with Eupraxia, and had a sudden desire to begin a conversation with her uncle's housekeeper. She wanted to know how it was Eupraxia did not find it atrocious in Golovlevo, and whence she derived the strength to hold out against the washy flow of balderdash that from early morning till evening welled up out of her uncle's mouth.

"Is it boring to you in Golovlevo, Eupraxia?"

"Why should it be? Are we not masters here?"

"Yes—but you are always alone, nothing to distract, no pleasures—nothing."

"What pleasure do we need. When it gets wearisome, I look out of the window; even below with the holy father at the chapel of Nicolai, I experienced but little merriment."

"But I should think it was better for you home than here. You, at least, had companions there—"

"Ah, yes, but—"

"But with uncle! He talks such frightfully boring twaddle, and so incessantly. Does he always speak like this?"

"Continually, and throughout the day."

"And that does not bore you to death?"

"Why? I don't even listen."

"But it is impossible to be deaf to it. If he notices that, he simply gets angry about it!"

"Why should he notice? I look at him; he speaks, and I look and all the time think about something else."

" What do you think about then ? "

" Oh, everything. If there are gherkins to preserve ; I think about sending into the town to fetch something ; then about what is requisite for the household—I think about all that."

" Although you live here both together, yet in truth you each live separately ? "

" My honour demands that I live alone. Often in the evening he wants to play cards, and we play, and then, frequently in the middle of a game, he stops, throws the cards together, and we talk. Of course, it was better when Arina Pétrovna, of blessed memory, was with us. He was afraid to speak too profusely before her ; the old lady used to interrupt him. But now it is not easy to see what particular pleasure he finds in it."

" It is frightful, Eupraxia, when a man speaks and does not know why he speaks, what he is speaking about, and whether he ought ever to cease. Horrible, isn't it ? Unbearable ! "

Eupraxia looked at her, as if for the first time her mind was illuminated by a wonderful thought.

" It is not you alone," she began, " that thinks so ; many of our people don't like him."

" You have it there."

" Yes. Not one of the lackeys can live with us long, and we change almost every month ; it is even the same with the overseers. And besides——"

" He torments ? "

" He tyrannises ; naturally, it is somewhat embarrassing here."

" Eupraxia, do you persuade me to stay here ? "

" Ah, mistress, you would get along quite well with us ! Perhaps in your presence he would restrain himself."

" Never, worthy servant ; I no longer have the patience to look him in the eye."

"What should I say to that! You are mistress, and can do as you will. We must submit to another's pleasure."

"And how often!"

"That I have thought, too. But might I ask you something: Is an actress's life a pleasant one?"

"One gets a good competence out of it—and otherwise, too, it is quite pleasant."

"But is it true, as Porphyrius Vladimiritch has told me, that actresses allow quite strange men to put their arms round their waists?"

"Porphyrius Vladimiritch understands nothing, hence he chatters nonsense. He cannot even see that on the stage there is no reality."

"But yet—Porphyrius Vladimiritch, when he saw you, pursed up his lips! And how good he looked, too! How covetous his eyes looked!"

"Eupraxia! Why do you talk such utter nonsense?"

"I? Oh, I know! Live here and you'll find out! I know already. I shall give notice and return to the priest. It is too tedious here; you have spoken truly."

"And the longer one stays here, the more boring it becomes here."

Eupraxia reflected awhile, yawned, and said:

"When I lived with the father, I was so thin, so very thin; but now, what do I look like?—like a stove."

The colloquy ended with this. Luckily, Porphyrius had not heard it, for otherwise he would have had a new and agreeable theme to broach, which would have provided an inexhaustible chapter of moral precepts. For two days he tormented and teased Anninka, speaking always in the strain, "wait, and be patient"; "softly and cautiously"; "praise God and pray," etc. He had ended by

completely exhausting her. At last, on the fifth day, they travelled into the town, but even then he found all manner of ways and means of tormenting his niece before finally starting off.

In the town they settled matters concerning the inheritance while the horses were being foddered. Porphyrius produced his calculations, according to which the capital of the orphans at the date of the death of Arina Pétrovna amounted to about twenty thousand florins in five per cent. stock. The petition for the termination of the guardianship was with the papers establishing that the orphans were of age, and then followed the actual removal of the guardianship and the delivery over of the estate to the owners. In the evening of that day Anninka signed the papers which had been executed by Porphyrius, and now breathed freely again.

The following days Anninka spent in lively agitation. She wanted to leave Golovlevo as quickly as possible, but her uncle only answered her urgency with jokes which, in spite of their good-natured tone, had in them something pig-headed which no human will could break.

"You promised to stay a week—now, remain for that time," he said. "What more do you want? You have no quarter to pay here; we demand nothing."

"But I cannot possibly stay!" answered Anninka.

"You are not constrained, but I shall let you have no horses," joked Porphyrius, "and thus you will remain my prisoner! The week will pass away—I will say not a word. And would you like once more to go to the grave in Woplino? Had you continually prayed, grandmamma would perhaps have communicated to you some good advice."

"As you please."

"We will arrange that you hear mass early

and then my horses will take you to Pogorelka; from there to Dvoriki you can travel with your own horses. You are now an owner and have your own horses.

And with that she had to be satisfied. She had continually striven to accomplish her liberation from Golovlevo in the natural course of things. But Porphyrius had so ensnared her with the unanswerableness of his humbug, that she no longer dared to evade him when he seized her and, "out of relationship," slapped her on the back with the words, "Now you have become a lady." She involuntarily shuddered when she felt his bony, lightly trembling hand on her back, but was restrained from any further expression of disgust by the thought: "Thank God, after a week he must let me go."

At last the looked-for day of departure arrived. Anninka was already up before six o'clock, but Porphyrius had anticipated her. He had finished his customary prayer, and was sauntering in slippers and dressing-gown round his rooms, listening here and squinting there. He was clearly upset, and looked askance at the meeting with Anninka. Outside it was already quite clear, but becoming overcast. The sky was covered with great dark clouds from which icy drops were drizzling. Porphyrius led Anninka to the window and indicated this picture of coming springtime.

"Do you still want to travel? Would you not rather stay?"

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, terrified. "That—that—will soon pass by!"

"Scarcely. Even if you go at the appointed time you will hardly reach Pogorelka earlier than seven o'clock this evening. And how can one travel at night in this thaw? You would have to spend the night in Pogorelka."

"I shall travel at night. I have plenty of courage, uncle. Dearest uncle, permit me to go now!"

"But what would grandmamma have said! She would have said: 'That's the nieces; they come, frisk and dance about, and then jump off again, without so much as asking my blessing.'"

Porphyrius stood still and was silent, and for some time stared at Anninka; then he cast his glance down. It was obvious he had no clear idea what answer to return.

"Wait a moment; I want to tell you something!" he began at last, and drew from his pocket a crumpled sheet of letter paper, which he handed to Anninka. It read:

"To-day I prayed to God to let me have my Anninka. And the good God answered me: Take Anninka by the waist and press her to your heart."

"Pfui, uncle, what insipid nonsense!" answered Anninka.

Porphyrius grew pale and whistled through his lips: "Certainly—it's only the Hussars we want!" Then he crossed himself, and shuffled off out of the room.

When he entered again a quarter of an hour later he joked with Anninka as if nothing had happened.

After hearing mass they came back to the house and drank some tea. At ten o'clock tea was at an end, and Anninka asked:

"Now can I not go, uncle?"

"Yes, but we must have something to eat for the journey? Do you think your uncle will let you fast? That is not the custom in Golovlevo!"

She had once more to possess her soul in patience. Half an hour went by, but there seemed to be no thought of laying the table. Everybody seemed to be occupied; Eupraxia with jingling keys was visible

in the yard, and about to go to the cellar. Porphyrius was quarrelling with the overseer, giving him impossible orders and slapping his thigh the while ; he seemed especially bent on dragging out the time as much as possible.

At last there was a clatter of spoons, knives, and plates ; the lackey, Stefan, appeared, and laid the table-cloth. But even he appeared to be contaminated by Porphyrius' qualities. Scarcely had he put the plates on the table than he must needs blow in every single glass and test each by the light. After one hour they sat at table.

Before Porphyrius stood a plate of soup, but he did not touch it, and only looked lovingly at Anninka. The latter hastily swallowed spoonful after spoonful. At last Porphyrius seized a spoon and occupied himself with his soup, but almost immediately laid his spoon down again.

"Pardon me, an old man!" he said. "I eat slowly ; I don't like to be too hasty with God's gifts. Be angry with me if you like. Be angry and take your leave ! You are no longer a girl, and will before long arrive at maturity. Then you will gather a little experience, and will say, 'Ah, uncle, pardon ; you are right, my dear.'"

Porphyrius crossed himself, and took two spoonfuls of soup ; then once more he laid his spoon down, and leant back in his chair to indicate that he desired to say something more.

"Bloodthirsty tyrant," was on the tip of Anninka's tongue ; but she restrained herself, took a glass of water and drained it. Porphyrius knew what was passing in her mind.

"What ? It doesn't please you ? Come, now, even if it does not please you, you must listen to your uncle. I have wanted for a long time to speak to you about your haste, but have had no time. It's a sign of a frivolity which is not good for you,

and pleases me all the less because you are inconsiderate towards the precepts of old and experienced people. Your uncle speaks with knowledge, and in a friendly spirit to you ; and you—you flare up. Do you know who gave you your uncle ? Tell me, who gave you your uncle ? ”

Anninka looked at him without understanding.

“ God has given him to you—He Himself ! God ! But for God you would be alone and wouldn’t know which way to turn, how and to whom to turn, and what to expect. You would be as it were in a wilderness ; one would insult you, another cheat you, and a third would gradually ensnare you. But you have an uncle, and, with God’s help, we could settle all your affairs in a day. We went into the town, got through with the guardianship business, and the petition and everything else ! See, my child, what it means to have an uncle ? ”

“ I am indeed very grateful, uncle ! ”

“ Well, then, if you are grateful, you must not flare up, but should listen to me. I advise you for the best—— ”

Anninka could hardly govern herself. There was only one thing to do to escape the avuncular precepts, and that was to act as if she were falling in with his proposal that she should remain in Golovlevo.

“ Good, uncle,” she said. “ I certainly think now, as well as you, that life far removed from one’s relatives is not very pleasant. I must think it over.”

“ Ah, you see, you are now beginning to understand ? But why first think it over ! Let the horses be unharnessed, the trunks taken off the kibitka—that’s all the ‘ thinking over ’ that’s wanted.”

“ No, uncle, you forget that I have a sister.”

It was impossible to decide whether this last argument prevailed over him, and he himself even did not know what particular reason he could adduce for continuing to keep her back. It was already three o'clock when the meal came to an end ; Anninka sprang up, ran to her uncle, and took her leave.

After ten minutes, Porphyrius conducted her downstairs, clothed in furs and boots of bear-skin.

" Go slowly uphill—do you hear ! In Senkino, take care that you don't go rolling down the declivity," he cried to the driver.

At last Anninka was muffled up and the travelling cover drawn up over the kibitka.

" Ah, would you were staying !" cried Porphyrius once more, so that all might seem to the thronging servants to be as it should with relatives. " You will come again soon ? "

Anninka now for the first time felt herself free, and it spurred her on to give him an answer. She leant out of the vehicle, and sharply accentuating every word, cried :

" No, uncle ; I shall not come here again ! It is frightful here ! "

Porphyrius made as if he had not heard, but he was pale to the lips.

* * * *

Her liberation from Golovlevo excited in Anninka such a degree of joy that the thought never entered her head for a moment that behind her she had left, in lifelong incarceration, a man for whom, with her departure, every bond that linked him with the world was torn asunder. At Woplinno, she calmly heard the mass and without tears prayed at the grave, willingly accepting the priest's invitation to tea.

The house in which the spiritual pastor of Wop-lino lived was a very wretched one. In the easterly corner of the room which served as a reception-room, stood the cupboard with the holy images and the eternal lamps. In the middle of one wall hung some daguerreotype pictures of saints. A strange smell prevailed in the room, as if it had for a long time been the haunt of flies and cock-roaches. The pastor, though still young, was markedly influenced by his surroundings. Sparse white hair hung down in smooth wisps over his head, like the branches of a weeping-willow. His eyes, once a fine blue, now looked dead, his voice trembled, and his beard was pointed and stiff. His priestly garb, buttoned in front, hung on him as on a wooden cross. His wife, also still a young woman, had, through yearly births, lost even more than had her husband.

Yet Anninka could not but observe that these people, lonely, simple and poor, conducted themselves towards her as if she were lawfully annexed to their parish, and as if they wished to show compassion towards her as a lost lamb.

" You were with your uncle ? " asked the pastor, taking a cup of tea from his wife.

" Yes, for about a week."

" Porphyrius Vladimiritch is now the largest property owner in our whole district. There is no greater ; but his life does not seem to be a success. First, one son died, then the second, and finally the mother. I wonder that he has not begged you to remain in Golovlevo ? "

" He did, but I am not staying."

" Why not ? "

" It is better to have one's freedom."

" But freedom, mistress, is not always a good thing ; it is not without dangers. And when one recollects that you are the next heir of Porphyrius

Vladimiritch, and consequently heiress to his estate, I should think one could restrict one's freedom a bit."

"No, father; my own bread is dearer to me."

The pastor looked in a troubled way at her, as if to say, "Do you know what it is, daily bread?" But he maintained silence.

"Do you get much pay as an actress?" asked his wife.

The pastor became embarrassed, and looked askance at his wife. He expected Anninka to get angry, but the latter merely answered with a smile:

"I am now getting a hundred and fifty roubles a month, and my sister—a hundred."

"Why does the sister get less? Perhaps she is not so clever?" asked the wife.

"No; I have a voice and sing, and that pleases the public better; my sister has not so strong a voice—she sings in vaudeville."

"But we agreed," continued Anninka, "to go halves."

"It's a lot of money," observed the pastor's wife. "We don't get as much for the whole year as you do a month. But what I wanted to ask you was this: Is it true that people behave towards actresses as if they were—not respectable women?"

The pastor again grew very embarrassed.

"How do you mean, 'not respectable,'" asked Anninka.

"Well, women whom one kisses and embraces; who are forced against their will—"

"They only make believe to kiss. There is no question of desiring or not desiring it, for the whole thing has to go according to the piece."

"Yes, according to the piece. But yet—many a man comes to you with a slobbering mouth, which

is disgusting to look at, and you have to present your lips to him."

Anninka involuntarily blushed. In her recollection loomed up the fat countenance of the worthy troupe-master, Papkov, who took a particular pleasure in sidling up to her; unfortunately his sidling up was not "according to the piece."

"You can have no accurate idea of what goes on on the stage," she answered drily.

"Certainly; I was never at the theatre. I have spoken about you with my husband, mistress, and we are so very sorry for you."

Anninka grew silent; the pastor plucked at his beard as if trying to summon up courage to put in a word.

"Fame and all manner of pleasantness and unpleasantness are present," he remarked at length. "One is carried away by it at first, then seeks to forget. And why? To banish the recollection of duty and a virtuous life."

He sighed.

"Why is your church so poor?" asked Anninka, to change the subject of conversation.

"Because for it wealth has in no quarter been created. The property owners go by during service, and the peasant has nothing to give; there are but two hundred souls in the entire parish."

"Our bell, too, has become quite dumb," sighed his wife.

"As well as other things. Our bell, mistress, weighs fifteen pounds, and now it is cracked. It now only makes a noise, and that entails disadvantages. The late Arina Pétrovna wanted to endow the church with a new one, and, had she lived long enough, we should certainly have had it."

"You must tell uncle that grandmamma promised it."

"I did, and he listened very graciously, but

could not give me a satisfactory answer. He said he had heard nothing about it from maminka, and that if he had he certainly would have complied with her wishes."

Anninka was about to take leave of them, but was invited to have something to eat. She took some mushrooms, but declined the madeira.

"I should like to have asked you one thing," observed the priest's wife; "in our parish there is a girl, the daughter of the servant Lyshchevsky, who was in Petersburg, being instructed by an actress. She said that life among the actresses was quite pleasant, but that every month they had to show a ticket. Is that so?"

Anninka looked at her without comprehension.

"It may be for the sake of freedom," declared the priest, "but I think she does not speak the truth. I have heard that many actresses even receive pensions from the government for their services."

Anninka thought "the further one gets into the wood the thicker the trees become," and rose to make her departure.

"We hoped you would forsake your situation as an actress," pursued the pastor's wife.

"Why?"

"You are a property owner, you have attained your majority, and are in the possession of your estate; what more can one want?"

"And are the direct heiress of your uncle," completed the priest.

"No. I shall not live here!"

At last Anninka went. On her arrival in Pogorelka her first words were:

"Horses as quickly as possible!" But Fiodulitch only shrugged his shoulders at the order.

"Horses? We have none here!" he snarled.

"What does that mean? My God! Are all, then, in a conspiracy against me?"

"Certainly! Why not, when it is clear to everyone that people cannot travel at night in this weather! My view is that it is better at home!"

The grandmother's rooms were already heated. In the bedroom stood the bed turned down ready, and on the writing-table hummed the samovar. Aphimiushka had the day before collected the remains of the tea left behind by Arina. While it was being poured out, Fiodulitch stood with his arms folded and his face to the door, while at his side were the cow-maid and Markovna, all in a pose as if they were ready at the first motion of the hand to take to their heels.

"The tea belongs to the blessed grandmamma!" began Fiodulitch, "it was left by her on the floor of the private chest. Porphyrius Vladimiritch wanted to take even the chest away, but I did not allow him to do so."

"You did not give it to him?"

"Why should I? He has enough tea of his own! But, mistress, is it true that you are going to hand us over to Porphyrius Vladimiritch?"

"I have never thought of such a thing."

"So! We had agreed that if that were so, we should all have arranged our departure."

"Really? Is uncle so frightful?"

"He is not frightful, but he is a tyrant, and knows how to destroy with words."

Anninka smiled involuntarily; yes, the words of Porphyrius were destructive and corrosive. Not merely vain chatter, but a gaping wound which gave out a ceaseless stream of pus.

"And what have you resolved on about yourself, mistress?" asked Fiodulitch further.

"Which means 'what have I been *compelled* to resolve upon?'" laughed Anninka.

"Are you not going to leave the actresses?"

"No. That is to say I have not yet thought of doing so. I must earn my bread as well as I can; what is wrong about that?"

"What is there in going about the fairs with the tamtam and playing up to drunkards? Oh, mistress! —"

Anninka did not answer, she only raised her eyebrows. In her mind ran the thought, "Lord, when shall I get away from here!"

"Of course, you must know better what you have to do, but it was our opinion that you would like to return to us. The house is warm and so spacious that one can play *gorelki** in it. If it becomes tedious, you can get the horses harnessed to the sleigh, and in the summer one can look for mushrooms in the wood."

Anninka propped both arms on the table, and endeavoured not to hear any more.

"A girl," began Fiodulitch, "who was being educated in Petersburg, told us that there all actresses had special marks, and that every month they were compelled to display them!"

The colour mounted in Anninka's face.

"Fiodulitch!" she cried in a loud voice. "What have I done to you? Be good enough not to insult me?"

She had had enough and felt as if something were surging in her; another word—and she would have been unable to endure further.

* Russian catchball.

CHAPTER V.

UNSAVOURY FAMILY JOYS.

NOT long before the catastrophe with Peter, Arina had, during her stay at Golovlevo, noticed that Eupraxia was getting stouter.

"Come now, my treasure! Just look at me! You are not well?" asked the experienced old lady of the guilty girl, but there was no censure in her voice; on the contrary it had a ring of joviality in it as if she were recalling some good old memories.

Eupraxia was silent partly from shame, partly from a measure of self-satisfaction; but under the searching scrutiny of Arina Pétrovna, her cheeks grew redder and redder.

"Does Porphyrius Vladimiritch yet know anything of this unexpected joy?"

Porphyrius, although he had already been informed, said nothing, but whistled through his teeth, and looked at a holy image as if to signify that everything came from God, and that He, the Heavenly Father, has everything in his care.

Arina told Eupraxia that she should have told Ulitushka about it.

"I wanted to," replied Eupraxia, "but the master did not like Ulitushka——"

"Oh, rubbish! If you have committed an offence, is it not with the master? Besides, I cannot actively interfere in this matter."

"Now, dear, make your belt looser. Do you want to go out sleighing? Try it by all means! I have had three sons and a daughter, and one child stillborn." Something suddenly seemed to occur to her. "Lord God—wasn't it Lent? Let me see, I will reckon up," and she began counting on her fingers—one, two, three—finishing up with Lent.

"Oh, you pious man! Just wait. I'll just take you down about it! Our leader in prayer! What a cropper you've come! As sure as I sit here, I'll pull his leg over it," joked the old lady.

In fact, that same day she turned to Porphyrius in Eupraxia's presence, and said :

"Well, you penitent saint! Just see what brave work you've accomplished! You have right well surprised yourself, haven't you, my friend?"

At first Porphyrius felt very uncomfortable under his mother's chaff, but when he remarked that Arina was speaking more in the "interests of the family" and from her "whole soul," he gradually got into a better humour.

"You are wanton, mother, very wanton," he smiled, and now interested himself in the common subject of their conversation after his own manner.

"Wanton! One must very seriously talk over the matter! The matter is a 'secret,' but I tell you, in its present state, no longer so. It is very necessary that a decision be come to whether she should remain here or go into the town."

"I don't know, maminka; I don't know," Porphyrius said, bowing to his mother.

"Well, then, we must first, for your sake, Eupraxia, speak a little more plainly, that you may be told how to act, and what must be done. We must arrange for everything down to the smallest details."

After Arina had thus declared herself, she found herself like a fish in its own element. The entire

evening she spent in conversation with Eupraxia, and did not get tired of talking to the girl. Even her own cheeks had become heightened in colour and her eyes glowed almost with a youthful fire.

"Do you know, dear," she said, turning to Eupraxia, "it is a divine gift! Take my word for it, and at Lent God will protect you."

They also asked Ulitushka's advice, speaking first about how the matter stood and whether or not one ought to apply a clyster, and then turning again to the all-beloved theme, reckoned up on their fingers—always finishing at a particular day in Lent. Eupraxia reddened like a poppy, but could not object to any purpose.

"What do they want?" she said. "It's my business. What if the master commands? They couldn't resist his orders?"

"Now, now, you little sneak! Don't start wagging your tail at him," laughed Arina. And in truth the women took an extraordinary pleasure in occupying themselves with such affairs, Arina recounting all her own experiences. Then tales about the girls on the estate were told, how often they had "confessed," and how often they had kept themselves going with the assistance of trustworthy people—generally with the assistance of Ulitushka.

The conclusion of these romances was usually very sad, often cruel—the guilty woman was married in some distant village, generally to some widower with a large family, while the guilty man was made into a cowherd or soldier. The cultured were accustomed for the most part to think of the past in a hospitable and mild spirit, but the final act of just such a "love intrigue" as this stood out as clearly before her mind's eye as if it were now, and it was followed in her time with the same lively

interest that one follows a feuilleton which continually winds up at the pathetic parts with "to be continued."

There followed narratives from the realms of good hopes, the so-called "politic" thing to do in such cases, in which Arina Pétrovna represented herself not as persecutor, but as the indulgent concealer; and she instanced the case of the birth unknown to the father—an old man of seventy, named Peter Ivan—of a little son, the event taking place actually under the old man's roof. It must be said, too, that Arina was speaking the truth, and seldom did a narrator find such attentive listeners. Eupraxia endeavoured to catch every word as if a wonderful story were being unfolded to her. But Ulitushka, having been an accessory at the majority of the events related, merely turned the corners of her mouth up at Eupraxia.

Ulitushka's life had been full of unrest. Since her youth ambition had flamed up in her when a bond-woman; and in her sleeping and waking hours, she strove to do all that was possible to serve her lord and to domineer over her own kind. But her efforts had come to naught. Scarce had she set her foot a step higher than an invisible force dragged her down again, and she stood once again in the same hell. Ulita had a perfect acquaintance with all branches of manorial service; she was clever and sharp tongued, but her unwelcome boldness nullified all her cleverness. At first, Arina had willingly made use of her services where it was a question of some secret matter, but she never esteemed her as a servant, and never let her execute any solid business. Ulitushka, in consequence, grew vexed and began to chatter; nobody listened to her grievances; they knew she was a bad girl. So she had brooded throughout her existence, everywhere at hand and obtaining nothing any-

where, until the time when the abolition of serfdom set a decisive limit to her egoistic dreams.

In her youth she had had an affair from which she had derived great hopes—with one of the sons of Golovlev—Porphyrius. She had a child by Porphyrius, an event which long violently angered Arina Pétrovna.

When Porphyrius came over and settled in Golovlevo, Ulitushka saw the merciless shattering of her dreams. Scarcely had Porphyrius arrived, when she came to him with a whole stock of invidious tales in which Arina did not come off very well. The “master” listened to these reports quietly, and looked Ulitushka in the eye, but coldly—he appeared to retain no recollection of his former favourite. Thus deceived and insulted, Ulitushka went to Dubrovino, where Paul Vladimiritch, full of hate towards his brother, willingly took her for his housekeeper. Here, while Paul drank, she had little scenes with Arina Pétrovna, whom she would dearly have loved to clear out of the world.

But Ulitushka was much addicted to treachery for the sake of procuring for herself the secret enjoyment of a share of the good things of life. It was at the time when Paul was already drinking himself to death that the end of her senseless vision came in sight. Porphyrius saw that in the existing state of things Ulitushka could again be very useful to him. She received the hint from Golovlevo not to budge a step from the cherished victim, to contradict him in nothing, not even in his hatred towards his brother, and in every relation to weaken Arina’s influence. It is needless to say how Ulitushka followed her instructions to the letter. Paul did not cease to hate his brother, and the more he hated the more he drank, and the less capable he became of listening to Arina’s remarks respecting “dispositions” of property. Every movement of the

dying man, every word of his was at once related to Golovlevo, so that Porphyrius knew exactly the moment when to step forth on the scene and reveal himself as the lord of possessions devolving on him. And he used the moment, appearing in Dubrovino at the precise moment when that estate was, as it were, bound to be given into his hands. And for this service Ulitushka was presented with some material for a woollen dress, and, as a special mark of recognition for having "stood by his brother in his last moments," Porphyrius assigned to her a corner of a cottage which, after the abolition of serfdom, was only inhabited by old time-expired servants.

And now that she was forgotten, it pleased her that Eupraxia was in "blessed condition." It was recalled that in that servants' cottage there lived a "very useful person"; a finger beckoned to her, and she came to the house, though it was not the "master" himself who beckoned. When she ostentatiously took the samovar from Eupraxia's hands, in the presence of Porphyrius, the latter said not a word. It seemed to her as if he smiled, as if for a second time she was meeting him in the corridor with the self-same samovar, and calling to him from afar :

"Lord, stand on one side, else I shall scald you!"

When now she was called in by Arina to the family council, she made a lot of fuss and did not show any readiness to be seated, but Arina cried out in a friendly voice :

"Sit down! Never mind silly formalities!" She obeyed, and at first was very shy, but soon found her tongue.

Besides her execution of delicate missions respecting girls' "affairs," Ulita enjoyed, at Golovlevo, in a measure, the reputation of an apothecary

and doctor, and on numerous occasions she had applied plasters and clysters.

In the meantime, Porphyrius did not abandon his strange attitude in regard to the state in which Eupraxia now found herself, and uttered not a word as to his part in the whole affair. Naturally, this was very unpleasant to the women ; they had discussions about it, and at last they simply drove him unceremoniously out of the room whenever, in the evening, he ventured to appear by the side of Eupraxia to warm his hands at the fire.

"Outside, outside, my son!" cried Arina Pétrovna. "You have completed your work, now let us women do ours! There is no holiday in our street."

Porphyrius quietly left, although he did not omit to scold his dear maminka for being so unkind to him, but in the bottom of his soul he was very well satisfied that they had not wearied him over the matter, and that Arina was taking such a lively part in this burdensome affair. Had she not taken this interest, God knows what way he would have turned to avert the happening of the fatal event, at the bare thought of which he trembled and spat. But now, thanks to the experience of Arina Pétrovna and Ulitushka's cleverness, he hoped that the "ill-luck" would vanish without becoming known, and that he himself would be told of the result when all was over.

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The expectations of Porphyrius Vladimiritch, however, were not fulfilled. First came the catastrophe with Peter, and hard on that the death of Arina Pétrovna. He could no longer send Eupraxia back to her parents as a wanton, by reason of the intervention of Arina, whereby the affair had

gone far and was now notorious. He rested only feeble hopes on Ulitushka's reliability; she was certainly skilful as a nurse, but if he confided in her she might easily bring him up against a public magistrate. For the first time in his life, Porphyrius grumbled in earnest over his lonely existence, feeling how oppressive it was to find his entourage now consisted only of people who, like backgammon men, were ready to deceive him.

"If maminka could only have waited a little!" he said to himself, "she would have arranged all that was necessary, reasonably and in secret—and God was with her. But she must needs die, and there is nothing more to be done! It grieves me about her, but if it pleased God thus, our tears, our doctors and druggists, and ourselves, too, are powerless against His Will. Had you lived, good old woman, you could have made yourself useful."

For some time now he tried to answer the questions of Ulitushka in the same way he had those of dear maminka: "I do not know; I know nothing!" But with Ulitushka, who was both brief and concise, and perfectly conscious of her importance, such subterfuges on his part rendered his game no easy one.

"What do I know? I have already rigged up a basket," she answered as soon as she had a word with him, so that he perceived that from now henceforth his expectations of a happy combination of the rôle of voluntary with that of an indifferent spectator at the result of his own work, would ultimately come to naught.

His misfortune came ever nearer, loomed ever more visible. It persecuted him everywhere, and, still worse, it disposed of his indifference. It required the strongest possible effort on his part to suppress a clear picture of this evil, to drown it in a flood of pious talk, but he only partially suc-

ceeded. He endeavoured to screen himself behind the inexorable laws of the Supreme Will, and, faithful to his word, derived therefrom quite a long thread of reasoning which grew interminable as he enlarged on the scriptural text, "Every hair on your head is numbered." But while these edifying thoughts welled up in unchecked babble from his mouth, one after another, as from a secret underground spring, there sounded suddenly a voice which abruptly stopped the flow. It was the word: Adulterer! and it had such an effect that Porphyrius could not even to himself furnish any answer to it. Anxiety and restlessness seized him, and he betook himself trembling to his room.

This was indeed an entirely novel restraint, which now, for the first time in his life, his shallow brain was learning to know. The fall of Vladimir and Peter, and also the death of his mother Arina, offered no grave difficulties to his hollow meditations. These were facts of an ordinary kind, universally experienced, on which judgment could be pronounced from known circumstances that for long had been developing. He had held masses and vigils for the dead, and thereby justified himself before the people as before Providence.

But adultery—how stood matters with that? It is the convincing proof of a life—the revelation of the inner lie of that life! If at one time people had regarded him as an intriguer, nay, even called him "bloodsucker," yet, with all their gossip, they had no sufficient proof, so that he could cry with all righteousness: "Prove it!" But now! He was—an adulterer, a convicted adulterer, and the time of the proof—Lent. Pfui, pfui!

While Porphyrius brooded thus in anxiety under the burden of his thoughts, there gradually developed in Eupraxia a completely unexpected inner change. The anticipation of motherhood had palpably

liberated her mind and nature from the fetters which had so constrained them. Hitherto she had been intractable towards everyone, and she only looked on Porphyrius as on her "lord," to whom she stood in an entirely dependent relation. Now she began to understand that henceforth she would play the principal rôle, and, as a result, her features, ordinarily so apathetic and sullen, cleared up and shone with a friendly radiance.

The death of Arina was the first fact which had broken in upon and agitated her half-conscious existence. However peculiar the relations of the old lady might have been to the approaching motherhood of Eupraxia, there had been evinced on her part an obvious sympathy, something quite different from the smooth indulgence of Porphyrius. Hence Eupraxia had become accustomed to see in Arina Pétrovna a protectress—just as if she harboured fears of some misfortune that might happen to her in the future.

Her understanding was not strong enough to enable her to say whence such a misfortune might come, and in what it might consist; but her instincts were so far developed that she experienced a terror at the look of Porphyrius, which she could not account for. Yes! It was from him that the misfortune must come! echoed again and again in her heart. From there, from this grave, filled with dust, to whom she had hitherto stood in the simple relationship of daily hireling, and who now, by a kind of miracle, had become father and lord of her child! The sentiment which was awakened in her by the last thought was akin to hatred, and might have changed infallibly to hatred had it not been for the diversion caused by the interest and sympathy taken by Arina who, by her good-natured gossip, did not leave her time for reflection.

But Arina had died. Eupraxia was now quite

alone. The stillness in which the house of Golovlevo was now sunk was peculiarly enhanced by the slow shuffling walk that announced when Porphyrius, holding up his coat-tails, was stealing by and sneaking down the passages in order to play the eavesdropper. From all corners reigned this creeping stillness, this deathlike stillness, instinct with superstition, melancholy and pain. The nearer her confinement approached so much the less could she seek any remedy in household duties, for in her physical condition she got so tired that by the evening she was wandering about almost asleep. She tried to joke with Porphyrius, but such efforts merely evoked a series of brief unlovely scenes, which, in her undeveloped mind, created a particularly painful effect. So there was nothing for her to do but to sit with her hands in her lap and to meditate—in other words, to fear. The reasons for her fears grew as the days went by, for the death of Arina had set Ulita's hands free, and introduced a new element into the household of Golovlevo—slander. And these slanders related to the only living creature for whom the soul of Porphyrius had breathed.

Ulitushka knew that Porphyrius was in great anxiety, and that in his inflated lying nature anxiety bordered closely on hate. Besides that, she knew perfectly well that he was incapable of any gratitude, and that he merely kept Eupraxia on to prevent the domestic economy from slipping back into its old groove. So, with these simple facts to go upon, Ulitushka contrived at every possible moment to nourish in him the seeds of hate whenever he happened to be brooding on the impending “misfortune.”

In a short time Eupraxia was surrounded by a perfect network of lies. Ulitushka had “exposed” the matter to the master. It came out that some

one was feathering her nest from the supplies of the master's house.

Ulita spoke of butter and gherkins, of the masses of washing, and fine swaddling clothes. Porphyrius blinked at her by way of answer, his bowels almost turning at her words.

"It is known that she is looking after the child," continued Ulitushka in a methodical tone of voice. "She thinks wonders are going to happen, and that she will have a regular prince!"

Occasionally her sole object was to harass him.

"What I wanted to ask you, master," she began once, is this: "What have you decided in regard to the child? Will you make him your own little son, or will you have it reared outside like the others—"

Porphyrius interrupted her question with such a black look that she kept quiet.

Porphyrius now began to look upon the impending birth as an affair which in no way concerned him, and conformably to that mental attitude, he endeavoured to lend to his countenance a passionless and indifferent expression. He practically ignored Eupraxia, and no longer called her by her name. In a word he seemed so harsh that even Ulitushka, who had in the school of bondage enjoyed a moderate experience of the searchings of the heart, perceived that against such a man, who was prepared for anything, it was impossible to fight.

The house was resting in darkness; light appeared only in the master's cabinet and in a small remote room where Eupraxia was. All around was deep stillness, occasionally broken by the smacking of Porphyrius' tongue as he made calculations about his money or scrawled his reckonings on paper. Suddenly, in the middle of the all-prevailing quiet, there reached his ear a

far-off, long-drawn note. Porphyrius was terrified ; his lips trembled, and his pencil scratched a continuous line.

" . . . Hundred and twenty roubles, and two and twenty roubles, ten kopecks," he whispered, struggling to forget the disagreeable impression which that groan had produced on him.

The screams meanwhile grew more frequent, and at last became incessant. Porphyrius left his writing table, and at first walked up and down the room trying to close his ears to it, but curiosity at length prevailing over him, he opened the door of his cabinet, poked his head into the darkness of the next room, and hearkened.

" Ah, they have forgotten the lamps by the holy image." " Lighten my pain," ran through his head.

In the passage there were now restless, noisy footsteps to be heard. Porphyrius cautiously closed the door and slipped on tip-toe to the holy image. In a second he was in the proper pose, striking his attitude at the proper moment, namely, when Ulitushka opened the door and entered to see him standing in prayer with folded hands.

" What in God's name is to become of Eupraxia ? " asked Ulitushka, showing little respect for the supplicatory attitude of Porphyrius.

The latter did not turn to her, but moved his lips still more hastily and, by way of answer, waved his arm in the air as if he were chasing a troublesome fly away from his face.

" What are you warding off with your hand ? I tell you things are very bad with Eupraxia ; she's pretty nigh dying ! " persisted Ulitushka in a rough voice.

Porphyrius turned this time ; his face was not agitated, but mild, as if he had just been liberated from all earthly torments in his conversation with

God, and now could not understand what people wanted to trouble him about.

"It is a sin to disturb prayer, but, as a man, I cannot complain. How often have I asked you not to disturb me at prayer?" he said, while a shake of his head indicated his Christian reproach. "What is really the matter with you?"

"'You.' Something more important than 'you'! Eupraxia lies in pains she can't bear! It's her first time. Do you hear? You must go and see to it!"

"See to what? Am I then a physician? Can I give advice? I know nothing about it. I know well that a sick person is in the house, but of what she sickens I am not curious enough to learn or to know. Send for the pastor if she is seriously ill. That's all the advice I can give. Send for him, pray together, and light the lamps and holy images; then will we drink tea with the holy father."

Porphyrius was very satisfied with himself for having spoken with such great composure at so critical a moment. But this peace of soul had no effect on Ulitushka.

"Go you must and see for yourself!" she repeated again.

"I shall not come. Why go without cause? If it were to the point, I'd come without being called. If I had for the sake of some business to go five versts, I'd go, even if it were cold outside, or snow-drifts everywhere. But this business stands thus, that I have no need to go!"

It seemed to Ulitushka as if she were dreaming, as if she saw standing before her and heard speaking a vision of Satan in his own person.

"Send for the pastor. You know what the scriptures say. Prayer is balm for the sick! Send

for the pastor and pray together—and I will pray at the same time in my cabinet."

The priest was sent for, but before he arrived Eupraxia was delivered in pain and agony. Porphyrius, from the shutting of doors and running to and fro, could conclude that something had happened. And, indeed, after a few minutes there echoed hasty steps in the passage, and into the cabinet came Ulitushka, all sail set, holding in her arms a little whining creature swathed in linen.

Porphyrius for a moment felt out of countenance; his body rocked a little forward, and a gleam lit up his eye. But only for a moment, for immediately afterwards he turned his face away from the child in disgust and made a deprecatory gesture with both hands.

"No, no; I'm afraid of such things—I don't like them—go, go!" he stuttered, and his features expressed a boundless loathing.

"But aren't you at least going to ask whether it is a boy or girl?" queried Ulitushka.

"No, no, why? It is not my affair. It is your business. I know nothing about it, and don't require to know anything. Go away, for Christ's sake, go!"

Again Ulitushka felt she was dreaming, and that she saw Satan.

"Good. I will take it and throw it on the sofa for you, and you can play the nurse," she threatened.

But Porphyrius was not the man to be so quickly embarrassed. When Ulitushka uttered her threat he was already standing again before the holy image with his hands folded. His nose almost trembled with inward peace, and Ulitushka, having noticed his face, spat and went out.

"A Vladimir has God taken, and another has He given in his place!" flashed through his mind,

and was no sooner fully conscious of this unexpected play of his thoughts than he murmured, " Pfui, pfui ! "

The priest came, and Porphyrius heard the church singers with their " Mighty Virgin ! " Once more came Ulitushka, and cried through the door :

" He has been named Vladimir ! "

The strange coincidence of this announcement with his own mental observation at the moment he had recalled his dead son, moved Porphyrius. He saw in it God's Will, and this time he did not spit, but said to himself :

" God be praised ; a Vladimir has He taken from me—another has He given. It is God's handiwork."

At last came the information that the samovar was ready. The worthy pastor, Alexander, was sitting in the dining-room, waiting for the lord of the domain. He was a politic man, and always tried, in his relations with Porphyrius, to lend to his voice a friendly tone. He knew how to value the fact that at festivals spiritual vigils were kept in Golovlevo manor throughout the night, and that on the first of every month a sermon was preached which yearly brought in an additional sum of at least one hundred roubles. Besides that he knew the parish glebe was not too strictly delimited, and hence in his friendly greeting there was no small admixture of fear of the lord of the domain. This fear expressed itself in his meetings with Porphyrius Vladimiritch in an extremely obliging demeanour, although at bottom there was really no occasion for it, and if the latter, in the course of his conversation, permitted himself to reveal some heretical views in regard to the ways of Providence, the pope, even if he did not exactly approve of it, saw neither mockery nor blasphemy in it, but merely the presumptuousness peculiar to the gentry.

When Porphyrius entered, the priest greeted him with assiduity, but quickly drew his hand away as if he feared that the Bloodsucker might bite it. He was on the point of wishing his parishioner good luck for the new-born Vladimir, but, not yet knowing how Porphyrius was taking the affair, he restrained himself.

There followed a desultory conversation on the weather, in the course of which Porphyrius said that if God sent warm weather they should rejoice, and if He sent cold, they should ask for His protection ; to all of which observations the priest replied, " Quite right " ; " that is also quite right."

" My opinion," continued Porphyrius, " is that it is not given to human understanding to search into the inscrutable, but only to keep oneself far from sin. If, for example, experiencing a sinful fit, I call my understanding to my help, crying : Show me the way to conquer weakness !—then I am acting rightly, for in such a case as that my understanding can be of real use to me."

" But faith can accomplish still more," remarked the priest in a low tone.

" Faith is directed to the object, but the understanding seeks the path. But, of course, the understanding must be united with faith, for the latter is useful to it and not prejudicial."

The priest did not reply to various other observations, and refrained from assenting to them, as he did not yet grasp whither the conversation was really tending.

" How often," continued Porphyrius, " do we find men falling into sin and committing crime all through lack of understanding. Man enjoys the fruit but without understanding, and then falls into the abyss. I certainly have understanding, and I understood, too, how to keep myself from temptation."

Porphyrius was silent as if he expected the pastor to take up the word, but the latter was not yet clear what Porphyrius' speech was intended to convey, and so without further deliberation, he said :

" I have some fowls in my yard ; they run about, fight with one another, and— And all because neither birds nor any animals or creeping things possess understanding. I was looking out of the window : a lot of starlings were perched together there with their beaks in the dung—and they were devouring ! For mankind it would have offered nothing. When, as here, faith even without understanding preserves us, we must act even as the birds."

Porphyrius was again silent for a moment ; but he had not yet completed the form in which his theme should appear in the most beautiful colours.

" But man must acquire everything for himself, because nothing is given him by Nature, and hence he requires much understanding in order not to stray into sin. Is that not so, reverence ? "

" That is certainly so. The scriptures say, too, if your eye vexes you, pluck it out."

" If you take it literally ! But then, if we turn to diligent prayer and seek to better the baseness of the body ? I, for example, I am in my best years, and cannot say I am ill : now, I have a servant and am very satisfied with her ! I know that I cannot get on without her—therefore I retain her ! She goes to the cellar, she boils the tea, she arranges everything, and God be with her. She does her duty, I do mine—and thus we live."

With these words Porphyrius tried to look the pope in the eyes, and the latter, on his part, endeavoured to catch Porphyrius' eye. But, as luck would have it, a light was between them, so that all each could see was the flame of the light.

" If I desired to enter into closer relations with my servant, she would, without doubt, rule in the house. But from thence would arise scenes, interchanges of words, and disobedience ; if one utters a word, one gets two in reply. Ah, that's what I fear so much."

The priest felt that a worldly demeanour rendered it necessary for him to interject a word from time to time, and so he shook his head and growled something through his lips.

" I only say," continued Porphyrius, " that if it pleases God to take my guardian angel away from me, then it is equally His pleasure to make me a widower. But if I must, through God's compassion, be a widower, I will at least be so with honour and keep my couch unstained. Is that not so, reverence ? "

" But that is very difficult, lord."

" I know it is hard ; but even so, I will fulfil it. Many a man says : It is hard ! But I say the harder it is the better, if only God gives me strength ! Not everything ought to be pleasant and easy—one ought to be able to sacrifice oneself for God. Here one suffers, there one gets one's reward. Do I not speak correctly ? "

" More so than on any other point."

" So, then, you are quite of my opinion ? If a man refrains from cursing, speaks no idle chatter, injures no one, and takes nothing from another, but prudently abstains from being guilty of all such offences, then he will always have a calm conscience, and nothing, no misfortune, can happen to him. And if, then, anyone accuses him behind his back, such accusations in my view ought not to be listened to. The law of Christian faith recommends to us in such cases reconciliation."

" And, accordingly, forgiveness. I have always, when anyone slandered me, prayed for him and

spoken with God on his behalf. To the slanderer, then, good was done in that a prayer in his behalf was urged on God's hearing, and to me was it equally well: Pray and forget."

"That is so; nothing eases the soul more than a prayer; trouble, anger, even illness—all disappear before prayer as the night's darkness before the sun!"

"God be praised! Thus a man must always conduct himself so that his whole life stands clearly before his eyes like a light in a candlestick. Then will he be the less calumniated."

Porphyrius rose and noiselessly moved his chair as a sign that the conversation was at an end. The pope also stood up and raised his head in blessing, but Porphyrius Vladimiritch took the priest's hand and held it in both his fists; he noticed what the other wanted.

"So you have called him Vladimir, reverence?" he said mournfully, throwing his head in the direction of Eupraxia's room.

"To the honour of that holy Prince Vladimir, esteemed of the Apostles, lord."

"Praise be to God and honour. She is a worthy, faithful servant, but one must not demand too much of her understanding, and hence it is that they all fall—into vice."

* * * * *

The whole of the following day Porphyrius did not come out of his cabinet, but prayed for enlightenment. On the third day he put in an appearance at morning tea, not as usual, in his dressing gown, but clothed as if for a festival; he always did so when he had resolved to dispose of some important business. His face was pale, but it bore witness to inward enlightenment, for on his

lips played a weak smile, and his eyes blinked in a friendly fashion, as if he would pardon the whole world ; while the point of his nose easily reddened as a result of his enormous mass of praying. He drank three glasses of tea in silence, whispering between the mouthfuls, and when he had finished the last drop, he sent for Ulitushka and took up his position before the holy image, in order once more to gain strength from converse with God, and at the same time to make it clear to Ulitushka that that which must now happen before her eyes was not his work but the work of God. Ulitushka knew at the first glance at his face that some proposition was ready in the depths of his soul.

"I have prayed to God !" he began, sinking his head as a sign of his devotion to the Divine Will.

"That is a very praiseworthy action !" answered Ulitushka, but in her voice rang such an unmistakable note of irony that Porphyrius involuntarily directed his gaze at her.

She stood before him in her customary attitude : one hand on her breast, the other supported under her chin ; on her features played an occasional flickering smile. Porphyrius gently shook his head as a sign of his Christian dissatisfaction.

"Has heaven sent its blessing, then ?" pursued Ulitushka, undismayed.

"You are continually mocking. You have an evil tongue, a serpent's tongue."

"But if God is prayed to, then surely He generally sends His blessing !"

"Don't chatter, and keep quiet in future ! I am speaking of an affair of business—and it——"

Ulitushka shuffled about first on one foot and then on the other, instead of returning any answer, as if she meant by this motion to convey to Porphyrius the fact that whatever it was he intended

to speak about, was something that was already completely known to her.

"Now, listen," began Porphyrius. "I have prayed to God, yesterday and to-day, and the upshot of it was always this, that, be it as it may, we must dispose of Vladimir."

"Dispose of him! He is no little dog; therefore why fling him into the water!"

"Silence! Stop!—let me speak; you are poisonous as a pestilence! Now, I say, be the case as it may, Vladimir must be disposed of. Of course, one is sorry for Eupraxia, but—it must be made—made into a man."

Porphyrius seemed to pause as if Ulita had some reply to make, but she maintained a cynical silence.

"I must then deliver him over to a teacher?" she asked at length, sharply looking at him.

"Ah, ah!" stuttered Porphyrius, "you are all gossip and wantonness! I am not thinking of a teacher; or, if I did think of one, there is perhaps something else for Vladimir!"

"Yes, also something else—herein there is also nothing bad."

"I say this: on the one hand it is a pity for Vladimir; on the other hand, if I consider the matter carefully, I find that it is not fitting that I should keep him in the house."

"The old story! What will the people say? They'll say: Whence comes then in the house of Golovlevo a small child?"

"Yes, truly, and also this: it won't profit the child to be in the house. The mother is young, she might spoil the child; I am old, and also have my weak side; but, in consideration of faithful service, I will—oh, well, you busy yourself with his disposal! If the child, on account of some foolish prank, is in need of chastisement, never mind the

tears of the mother, never mind her screams, will you——?"

"I am ready, certainly——"

"But I am particularly desirous that everything should be right well arranged, in order that Vladimir may, in course of time, grow up into a useful man, a servant of God, and a subject of the Czar. May God fill him with Christian thought that he may learn to till, to harvest, to plough, and all that sort of thing. Or, if Fate assigns him to another calling, that he may learn some handicraft or wisdom, for which latter he will certainly require several teachers."

"Oh, yes, generals have come straight from the house of instruction."

"Whether generals or something else, does not matter. It is possible he may one day become renowned, and they bring one up there in excellent manner. They have clean bedclothes, napkins—in a word, everything!"

"So much the better—for the parentless!"

"But suppose he did go to the village as a pupil. With infinite labour and pains he would no doubt learn in childhood's years; but the labour would be like that involved in prayer. The poor man would be happy, if like us he could pray; but he can scarcely do so on festive occasions. Yet God sees his efforts, and rewards him for them just as He does us for our prayers. We can't all live in palaces; some must live in lowly cottages and cultivate Mother Earth! But happiness—grandmamma asked this—where is it? Many live wealthy in palaces, but on their gold fall tears, while others lie on straw and eat black bread, and yet bear a paradise in their souls. Is that not so?"

"The best thing is the paradise in the soul!"

"Thus do I desire to treat with you. Take the rascal Vladimir, pack him up nicely and warmly,

and travel with him as sharp as you can to Moscow. I will have a covered kibitka ready for you, and a pair of good horses ; the road is now smooth and level. See to it that the child has a good shirt, and swaddling things, and that there is enough of everything. When you arrive in Moscow, alight at an inn and ask for a samovar of tea. Oh, Vladimir, Vladimir, what a blow of fate ! How it pains me to be parted from you, but there is nothing to be done for it ! You yourself will yet appreciate the advantage of it, and will bless me."

Porphyrius muttered with his lips to indicate that he was praying. But this did not prevent him from furtively looking at Ulitushka, when he noticed a satirical, convulsive movement flicker over her face.

" What is the matter ? Do you want to say anything ? "

" No. It is quite natural that he will bless, if he looks for his benefactors.

" Ah, you evil woman ! Do you think, then, we shall give him away without a ticket ? You must take one, and with it we can always find him again. With our ticket we could fish him up from the sea itself. Do you not think so ? "

She did not answer the question, but the sarcastic play of her features was sharper than ever. Porphyrius could not bear it any longer.

" Beast, accursed woman !" he said. " The devil is in you. To-morrow, at daybreak, you take Vladimir and speedily—so that Eupraxia hears nothing—travel to Moscow. You know the house of instruction ? "

" I believe I do," replied Ulitushka, monosyllabically, as if sunk in a reverie of the past.

" For your expenses I will give you bills for twenty-five roubles. You must present them in secret, and at another place give a little donation

in paper ! We are all human, and desire that which is agreeable and nice—as much indeed for the sake of our Vladimir ! ”

With these words, Porphyrius crossed himself, bowed low before Ulitushka, silently recommending her not to let the little creature out of her keeping. Thus was the future of the family arranged in the simplest possible way.

* * * *

On the following morning, as the young mother lay in a fever-heat, Porphyrius stood at his dining-room window moving his lips and making the sign of the cross. From the cleanly kept yard a light kibitka travelled away, carrying Vladimir in it. Porphyrius made a final sign of the cross and sighed :

“ Reverence, recently we were speaking about the thaw, but God has sent cold instead—cold and something else. We build castles in the air, and think we are cleverer than God—but He disposes and in a minute all our pride is turned to naught.

CHAPTER VI.

DIED OUT.

A CERTAIN agony began to enter the soul of the lord of Golovlevo from the time when that garrulousness, in which he had hitherto so willingly found a refuge, began visibly to pine away. Everything around him was desolate. Some were dead—the others had left him. There remained only Eupraxia, but apart from the fact that she possessed but limited conversational gifts, she now revealed a cunning and intolerant behaviour which came to light on every occasion, and convinced Porphyrius that the halcyon days of yore were gone for ever.

Till now she had been so patient that he could trick her without the slightest risk. When he scolded, she merely looked at him with indifference, and thought about something else. But now she learnt to understand, and the first consequence of this awakening of her faculties was an unexpected, almost dangerous and insuperable hostility.

The stay of the lady of Pogorelka was manifestly not without results for Eupraxia. The effect of the visit of Anninka to Golovlevo showed itself particularly in the awakening in Eupraxia of the consciousness of her youth, which hitherto had only glowed in hidden stillness, but now flared up with intensity. She now understood much in relation to which she had earlier been

apathetic ; she now understood why Anninka had not agreed to remain in Golovlevo ; why she had said straight out : It is frightful here !—Why, then ? Because she is young, and wants to enjoy her life ! Yes, Eupraxia, she too is young, she too is young, indeed, she is !—Eupraxia thought of her intimate relations with Porphyrius—and now ?—an old decayed stem ! How he wished to live comfortably with his friend, with the only one he had, and one who was yet so young ! To embrace her and to kiss her, babbling adulatory words in her ear—cursed ghost ! In spite of his withered limbs, he found the means of dazzling her ! See ! even the lady of Pogorelka possessed her precious treasure of woman-hood ! And therefore she had sailed proudly away with her trailing skirt. But she, Eupraxia, sits here within these walls, waiting for anything that should come into the head of this old man.

Eupraxia did not show what was passing in her mind, but she brooded over the past, and while Porphyrius had no presentiment of the gloomy thoughts that were waxing in her mind, the hate in her silently blazed up with every minute.

She complained that she had enjoyed nothing of the world, and compared the position of other girls with hers. There dwelt in Masulino, the Palagejushka, who lived with her lord as house-keeper, but went about in silk, and did nothing but fold her hands in her lap, as she sat in her beautiful rooms—and all her complaints continually ended with the cry of woe :

“ How cold my heart grows towards him ! So cold, so cold.”

With this thought was associated another—the thought of her child, of the disappearance of her son Vladimir.

When this had come to her knowledge, Eupraxia

maintained an entirely apathetic demeanour towards the whole business. Porphyrius gave her a new shawl to keep her quiet, and matters having been thus arranged, all went on as before.

Eupraxia buried herself with greater zeal than before in the chaos of household affairs, as if she desired to bury the memory of her resultless motherhood. But soon the maternal heart began to stir in her. Continually did the recollection of Vladimir fill her mind. She felt that there was in the world another existence, which was being led in circumstances very much different from those in which existence was led in the walls of the house of Golovlevo.

"What has he done?" she fretted. "He has taken my child from me! Just as one drowns a pup in the pond."

Gradually this thought began to imbue her to the exclusion of all else. One passionate wish dominated her—to be united once more to her child. And this wish became all the more ardent the more her hate towards Porphyrius Vladimiritch grew in force.

"Vladimir, my child! where are you? Have they hidden you in some village? Yes, for you there are abysses, you accursed great ones of the earth! Children you can put in the world, and then throw aside like young animals! And no one asks about it! It would be better if I could slit my throat with a knife. Oh, to grant him just one kind word!"

Her hate now existed to torment her passion; to embitter and ruin her life. The most insufferable of all wars began—the war of cunning and malice, of spite, of small pin-pricks—a war of a kind that was bound at length to break Porphyrius Vladimiritch.



One morning Porphyrius was sitting at tea in a very bad temper. He had been served this day with warm fresh-baked bread, and had begun to develop his views about the visible things with which we preserve our bodies and the invisible spiritual things which promote our redemption, when Eupraxia, utterly regardless, broke in on his effusion :

"People say that the Palagejushka is very comfortable in Masulino," she began, turning bodily round to the window and swinging her feet about.

The unexpectedness of the remark startled Porphyrius, but he attributed no further significance to it, and went on :

"And if we eat no visible bread——"

"Palagejushka, do you hear, lives so agreeably in Masulino!" interrupted Eupraxia, this time not without intention.

Porphyrius, out of countenance, kept silent as if he felt uncomfortable.

"Yes, to be sure," continued Eupraxia in an audacious manner, "her master does not annoy her in the least, he does not force her to work, and lets her go about in silk clothes."

Eupraxia's talk was going so far outside his train of thought that he was not in a position to find a reply.

"And every day she has other clothes," went on Eupraxia. "She drives to church in a four-horse carriage, she and the lord, and the moment the pastor spies them he has the bell rung three times. When her lord wants to dally with her, she receives him, but only through the waiting-woman, and then she entertains him, and embroiders pearls."

"Well, what does that mean?" asked Porphyrius at last.

"I was just saying what a pleasant life she led."

" But yours, by heaven, is sad ? Ah, ah, what an insatiable person you are."

Had Eupraxia then kept silent, Porphyrius would have re-opened the flood-gates of his twaddle, but Eupraxia manifestly had no intention of holding her tongue.

" My life is a very sad one ! In *coutil* I can't go about, thanks to the lord ! Last year I got five roubles for two figured dresses—they are now torn—"

" What about your woollen dress ? Didn't I recently buy you the cloth ? Oh, oh ! "

Instead of answering, Eupraxia fixed him with an invidious eye, so full of deep contempt that he felt quite strangely uncomfortable.

" Do you know that God punishes ingratitude ? " he answered.

" Oh, none of that ; what's all that talk to me, or the punishment of God ? I'm no longer a child. Your rule is at an end ! You have been a tyrant ! "

Porphyrius was silent. His face was pale, his lips gently trembled, as if they were endeavouring to curl up into a smile.

" Ah, see now, that's just the manner of Anninka ! The false creature has incited you, eh ? " he broke out at last, without any clear idea of what he was talking about.

" What manner ? "

" As you have just been talking to me ! She's taught you ! No one else ! " he foamed. " Do you know, shameless one, who, in your position of life, goes in silken dresses ? "

" If you tell me, then I know it."

" Only the loosest and most dissolute—they alone do it."

But Eupraxia was not to be embarrassed.

" I don't know," she answered boldly enough, " how far they are dissolute. As you know, it is

the masters who demand it. If a lord wins one of our sisters she lives with him now ! But I have not even prayed with you."

" Oh, what a creature you are. Pfui, pfui."

He looked with widely opened eyes at his refractory favourite, and an avalanche of talk gathered in the interior of his breast, but for the first time in his life he learnt to understand that there are occasions on which the most adroit word is not capable of conquering.

" Now, dearest, there is no talking with you to-day, I see," he said, rising from the table.

" To-day you won't be able to talk with me, nor to-morrow, never ; and that's the way it will be ! You have governed and I have served long enough ; now you just hear how my words can sound ! "

Porphyrius implored, wringing his hands, but in face of her firm will he suddenly lost all his courage. He turned his face to a holy image, muttered, and walked slowly into his cabinet.

The whole day he was in the same strange frame of mind. He harboured no fears for the future, it is true ; but one thing did disturb him, namely, the fact that some scene might occur for which he would not be prepared, and that such scene must pass unresented. By midday he had not left his cabinet, but, on the plea of illness, asked in a feeble voice for his food to be brought to him. In the evening after tea he rose for his customary prayers. A tormenting anxiety pervaded his whole being, and he involuntarily strained his head to catch the feeble sounds of daily life which were audible in the house ; at last all became quiet. He could hold out no longer in his cabinet, and so stole noiselessly out on to the corridor and slipped down to the door of Eupraxia's room. Here he put his ear to the keyhole to listen. He was able to catch her yawning voice saying :

"Lord, spare us in Thy goodness ! And you, holy mother ! "

Porphyrius tried to open the door, but it was locked.

"Eupraxia, are you here ? " he asked.

"Yes, but not for you ! " she returned in such a mocking tone that Porphyrius betook himself back to his cabinet.

There was a fresh conversation next day. Eupraxia chose the occasion of morning tea to wound Porphyrius anew.

"I ought to have seen first how certain other people live," she began, speaking as it were into space.

Porphyrius felt everything turning over in him. He held his tongue in anticipation of what might be coming next.

"It's so delightful to live with a dear young girl friend ! They caress each other, and no angry word ever passes. 'My soul,' or 'my friend'; but other ways of speaking they don't use ! That's indeed lovely."

This was a deeply hateful theme with Porphyrius. Although he held non-marital love to be an indispensable necessity, yet he regarded caressing and love-making to be the temptation of the devil. This time, however, he kept quiet, the more so as he wanted some tea ; but, though the samovar was bubbling up, Eupraxia made no move to hand him any.

"No doubt our sex numbers all too many fools," she continued, drumming with her fingers on the table. "Some are so ensnared that they are ready to do anything for a cloth dress, while others besides everything else forfeit even themselves. They think because they can eat what they will, that they have found something splendid."

"But from interest alone," Porphyrius ven-

tured to remark, his eyes directed to the samovar from which steam was now rising up.

"From interest alone? Have I not myself been interesting enough?" cried Eupraxia, suddenly turning the conversation into another channel.

"But it's the food that troubles you! You now reproach me for every mouthful."

"I reproach you with nothing! I only say that men do not merely from interest——"

"Oh, yes, yes, 'I only say'! Never forget what you say! I will *from interest* listen, but allow me to ask this: what particular interest have I ever found in you? That is, outside kwas and gherkins?"

"It's not only kwas and gherkins! I have imposed no restraint. I, on my side, Porphyrius Vladimiritch, have reserved——"

"Words, only words; always words!"

"Who every month sends four sacks of meal to the father?"

"Well, four sacks! Further than that you don't want to go!"

"Lent-butter——"

"I have been guilty! Here not a bite is given to me that would not be a reproach, and I stand laden with crime."

Eupraxia could no longer contain herself, and burst into tears. The tea foamed meanwhile from the samovar to such an extent that Porphyrius grew quite anxious about it. Taking courage, he sat circumspectly beside Eupraxia, and laid his hand on her back.

"Pour out some tea—why are you weeping?"

But Eupraxia sobbed two or three times, pouted, and looked in a troubled manner into space.

"You continually speak of young folk," continued Porphyrius with an effort, lending to his voice as

friendly a ring as possible ; but even we are, I should think, not too old——”

“ I have had experience. Leave me ! ”

“ I—do you know—when I was in a government department, the director wished to give me his daughter in marriage ! ”

“ She was probably already old, and perhaps a little wry-faced.”

“ No, she was very presentable, and when she used to sing the song, ‘ Approach, dear mother mine,’—ah, she sang it so beautifully, so beautifully——”

Porphyrius became quite undecided. He felt very much disposed at last to show that he was a past master in regard to relations with the fair sex. He began in a clumsy fashion, rocking his body, and made as if to seize Eupraxia round the waist ; but the latter drew back from his outstretched arm, crying angrily :

“ By my honour, I say, leave me, goblin ! Or I’ll throw this boiling water over you. I don’t want any more of your tea ; I tell you I don’t want it ! You have dared to cast your food in my teeth ! I am going away from here ; by Jesus, I am going ! ”

And in truth she left the dining-room, slamming the door behind her.

Porphyrius was utterly confounded ; he tried to prepare the tea himself, but his hands trembled so that he had to call a lackey to his assistance.

“ No, not so quickly ! There must be a change,” he muttered, marching up and down the room in an agitated fashion.

But he was not in a position to bring any change about. His spirit was so accustomed to jump from one fantastic subject to another when he was opposed by difficulties that a real situation completely put him out of countenance. No sooner

had he begun to "reflect," than a whole host of empty chimeras pressed in on him from all sides and shut out from his understanding every ray of real life. Once more he wasted the entire day in complete solitude, Eupraxia spending the day in visiting the pastor and returning late in the evening. One thought continually tormented his brain: something must be done! But he could no longer make resounding speeches nor even pray. More than once he remained standing at the window in the hope that some idea would illuminate his enfeebled understanding. But it was all in vain. The dim snow-covered fields outside, the naked trees, all appeared to him as if through a mist. Absolute solitude reigned around the damp farm buildings, and even in the house not a voice was to be heard, only a sound as if in the distance doors were being closed.

His eyes bored the distance to spy out the house of the pastor, in which in all probability Eupraxia was indulging in complaints.

Ever fresh chimeras continued to overwhelm him, and he began to become oblivious as if sleep were gripping him:

"How many spoons of *shchi* will the pastor have over for her? What would he say to his wife about Eupraxia's visit? What opinions about her will they exchange?" The whole scene, conversations, and dinner, appeared as visibly before his eyes as if he were present.

"They are eating together from one spoon! She has gone away! It is wet outside and dirty, and how long she is staying! She will soil her clothes—how vulgar! Yes, something must happen."

Continually thoughts like these drove through his brain. After dinner, he lay down for his customary nap, but could find no rest. Eupraxia only came back when it began to get dark, and then she

stole so softly into the room that he did not notice her. He ordered his servants to tell him when she returned. But they did not say a word. He now endeavoured to get into her room, but he found the door locked.

It was only on the third day, early in the morning, that Eupraxia put in an appearance again at tea, but she spoke in a still more menacing and determined manner.

"Where is my Vladimir?" she began, her voice choked with tears.

Porphyrius was nonplussed by this question.

"Although I set eyes on him myself when he was born, he is dead, is he not?"

Porphyrius moved his lips and murmured a prayer.

"With us everything is different to what it is with other people! When the lady Palagejushka had a daughter at Masulino, the baby was at once wrapped up in cambric and placed in a beautiful rose-coloured cradle. But with us! Ah—you!"

She turned her head to the window and sighed deeply.

"It is true that all great lords are godless. They beget children—and throw them in the pond like young dogs. They owe no responsibility, not even to God. A wolf would not act like that!"

"This is the third day," hissed Porphyrius through his teeth, "that I've been listening to your talk!"

"You have got a child," she went on. "What have you done with it? You have allowed him to be destroyed in the hovel of some old woman!"

She wept and dried her eyes with her neckerchief.

"How truly spoke the lady of Pogorelka, that it was frightful to be with you! It is awful here! No pleasures, no joy; only intriguing!"

Prisoners in gaol are better off ! If I only had my child—but it—has been taken from me.”

Porphyrius sat moving his head in a depressed manner, and from time to time emitted a groan.

“ Ah, it is intolerable ! ” burst forth from him at length.

“ It is nothing of the kind ! The ploughman only hurts himself if he mows badly ! But I’m off to Moscow to look, with my own eyes, for my Vladimir ! Vladimir ! My sweet son ! To Moscow ! ”

“ There is no object in that,” said Porphyrius, almost inaudibly.

“ No one can stop me—because I am—a mother—”

“ What sort of mother ? You are a useless sweetheart ! ”

“ So ! you call me a useless sweetheart now,” she cried bursting into tears. “ Yes, a useless sweetheart, a sweetheart. Pfui, pfui ! ”

Porphyrius jumped from his chair, and rushed from the dining-room. The last utterance, full of energy, had beaten him.

He now became inactive, dull, and dejected whenever Eupraxia’s representations threatened to become interminable. For there was a certain tremendous force in them—a perverse irritability of temper—and this force and temper were always directed to the same end : to excite annoyance, and to embitter his life. Soon the dining-room became too restricted a theatre of operations for her, and she made her way into the cabinet to call Porphyrius to account. Formerly she would not have dared to go into the cabinet when the master was “ busy.” Now she walked in, sat at the window, looking with mournful eyes into the void while, with her chin on her arm, she began her irritable talk. She was always harping on the threat to leave Golov-

levo, but, in truth, if anyone had suddenly made the proposal to her to return to her parental abode she would have been quite astonished. She thought, however, that Porphyrius feared her departure more than anything else.

"To-day," she said, "they are going to make pancakes at Nikol's."

Porphyrius grew green with anger. He was just then deep in some important calculation as to how much he would get for his milk this year, if all the cows of the surrounding district perished and only his own, with God's help, remained unharmed. So when Eupraxia came into the room with this announcement, he had to let drop his calculations, and tried to suffuse his face with a smile over her words.

"Why are they baking pancakes there?" he asked. "Ah, to-day they are honouring the dead; I have forgotten it."

"I should like to eat pancake, to the honour of my parents."

"Who is there to forbid you? Have some made ready! There is the cook, Mariushka, and also is there not Ulitushka? Ah, she bakes them splendidly."

"I believe she has pleased you in many another way," said Eupraxia acidly.

"No, that would be a sin; but she bakes pancakes very well, does Ulitushka! So light and delicate."

Porphyrius tried to distract Eupraxia with jokes and smiles, but all he got by way of answer was:

"I should like some very much, but none from Golovlevo; I want those of my parents."

"Well, that can be arranged! We have Archipushka, the coachman! Let a pair of horses be harnessed and driven there!"

"No, no. I should be right simple to fall like

a bird in the trap. You yourself have said that I am only a useless sweetheart."

"Ah! ah! ah! Isn't it repugnant to you to utter untrue accusations? Do you know how God punishes that?"

"You called me that, and there it remains! As true as the holy image stands here; by it and by God! Ah, how hateful it is, this Golovlevo; I shall fly from here; yes, fly!"

Eupraxia accompanied these words with behaviour of an especially unconstrained kind, swinging herself about on her chair, blowing her nose and combing her hair. It was obviously only comedy.

"I should like to tell you, Porphyrius Vladimiritch," she continued, "that I am required at home."

"Do you want to go to your father and mother for a time?"

"No. I want to remain there altogether!"

"Why? Are you annoyed about something?"

"No, but I am necessary there. And here, with you, it is too boring; yes, it's frightful! In the house it is just as if everything had died out. The people all poke themselves away in the kitchen or servants' halls, and I sit here in the house all alone. And at night, when one lies in bed, from every corner comes a kind of whispering."

As the days went by, however, Eupraxia did not think of carrying her threat into execution; but it was no less decisive in its effect on Porphyrius. He suddenly perceived that he was not in a position to be able to do anything—that if there were not some one to superintend the household, he would get no white shirt, no midday meal, nor a nice clean towel. Hitherto each day with him had passed with clock-work orderliness; everything was done in its proper time, everything was always in its place—in a word, there reigned everywhere such an

immutable spirit of orderliness that he had no longer ascribed any particular meaning to it all. Thanks to this prevalent order, he could give himself over to his gallantry and his garrulity without any fear that life's daily occurrences would disturb his equilibrium. It never occurs to men who are constantly encompassed by a machine like this, how slender and destructible it all is. Life to a man like Porphyrius seemed enduring, nay, everlasting. And then, suddenly, the whole thing collapses at the foolish words, "Oh, I won't stand it any longer. I am off!" "What if she really went?" thought Porphyrius, and began to revolve all manner of plans which had never even entered his head before, to keep her there.

Soon he came to be convinced that his fears in that direction were unfounded, but his whole life entered on a new and quite unexpected phase. Eupraxia not only did not go, but even became less prolific in remonstrances. She had conquered Porphyrius Vladimiritch. May came, and Eupraxia was almost never to be seen in the house. On getting up in the morning, he never found his clothes in their accustomed place. It was only with difficulty that he got clean linen, and both tea and the midday meal were either served too early or too late, and the honours were done by the lackey, Prochor, who was generally half drunk, and always in a stained coat from which emanated a mingled odour of fish and brandy.

Nevertheless, Porphyrius was joyful, because Eupraxia left him in peace. He had even become reconciled to the general disorder; it dismayed him much less than the thought of the bare possibility that he personally might have to busy himself over all the little trifles of life. In the anticipation of such a time he strove to suppress every protest, and shut his eyes to the prevailing

confusion. Out in the farm and yards a regular sluggard's life was being led ; with the advent of warmer weather, the life of the people on the Golovlevo estate began to revive. In the evenings the whole village, old and young, including the independent as well as those attached to the soil of the Golovlevo property, congregated in the street. There was singing and playing on the harmonika, much hearty laughing, whistling, and "gorelki." The contor-servant, Ignat, appeared in a fiery shirt and a quite astonishingly narrow jacket, while Archip, the coachman, wore a silken shirt and a plush-vest without sleeves. They vied with each other for the conquest of Eupraxia. Eupraxia ran about and playfully favoured first one and then the other. From time to time the din smote the ear of Porphyrius, who shrank from even looking out of the window. The coachman, Archip, while running in "gorelki," gave Eupraxia a smack after every "five" as he pursued her. Nor was she very angry about it.

"Eupraxia Nikitishna ! Eupraxia Nikitishna !" called the drunken Prochor from the wing of the lord's domicile.

"What is it, then ? "

"Give me the key for the tea ; the master wants some tea ! "

"Let the monster wait ! "

* * * * *

In a short time Porphyrius had become completely shy of contact with mankind. He desired nothing better than that he should be left undisturbed in his refuge—his cabinet. In the same degree that he had been spiteful and malicious towards his servants and surroundings generally, he had now become timorous and modest. To hear

nothing more and to see nothing more was his dearest wish. Often Eupraxia never showed herself in the house, and the servants could scold and make holiday in the yards as much as they chose—he was apathetic towards everything, as if nothing had any meaning for him. In the cabinet, all alone, he felt himself absolute master, and unconditionally free to give himself entirely over to his fancies. Just as his two brothers had succumbed to the bondage of drink, so now he suffered from a similar malady ; but his drunkenness was of another kind—it was spiritual. Immured in his cabinet, he sat at his writing-table from early morning till evening occupied exclusively with his delusions.

In all this unfounded chaos of fantastic chimeras a morbid yearning for lucre played the principal part. Although Porphyrius had always been inclined to intrigue, he had, on account of his incapacity for practical action or thought, never derived any tangible results from this tendency. He had tormented and tyrannised over people—generally those who had no means of defence, and who, so to speak, offered themselves as victims—but he himself had been the principal sufferer from his craving for intrigue. These qualities he had now withdrawn to a secluded retreat where there was neither resistance nor support, where neither strong nor weak were present, and where, free and untrammelled, he could now involve the whole world in a network of slander, intrigue, and injury.

He recalled every encounter and discussion which he had had, not only in more recent times, but those of his youth, and now reshaped them all according to his taste, so as always to make himself come out the victor. In his thoughts he revenged himself on those of his quondam official associates who had gone over his head in the service, and so grievously injured his *amour-propre* that they had caused him

to renounce an official career. He revenged himself on those of his school companions who had used their physical strength to molest or subdue him. He revenged himself on his propertied neighbours who had opposed his chicanery and denied his rights ; on his servants who had been wanting in the necessary degree of reverence ; on his mother who had spent on the refurnishing of Pogorelka so much of the money which by law would have come to him ; on his brother Stépane, who had given him his nickname ; on his aunt Barbara Mikhailovna, who had unexpectedly given birth to children, with the result that he had for ever lost the succession to the property of Goriuschino. On the living and on the dead he revenged himself.

In this world of fantasy he fell insensibly into a veritable intoxication. The ground swam under his feet, his eyes glowed, his lips trembled and got covered with foam, while his face grew pale and took on a threatening expression. The victims of such an ecstasy are no longer men ; the face sinks in, the eyes glow, the tongue stammers words unconsciously, and the body rocks in involuntary motion.

But he was happy. He closed all doors and windows so as to hear nothing, and let the curtains down so as to see nothing. All the customary duties of life which had no relation to the world of his ecstasy he settled as quickly as possible, and almost with loathing. When the drunken Prochor entered to announce the serving of dinner he betook himself impatiently to the dining-room, and, contrary to his former wont, ate his three courses hastily, and then withdrew to his cabinet. He rose in the mornings as quickly as possible, in order to be able to devote himself at once to his new activity. He cut his prayer-time short, and uttered the words of

his prayers without feeling, as if he did not understand their meaning.

Eupraxia, in the meantime, was burning with longing. She was undecided in her choice between the contor-writer, Ignat, and the coachman, Archip, while at the same time she was making eyes at the sun-burnt carpenter, Plushka, who was then mending the master's cellar. She did not see what went on in the house. She thought Porphyrius was probably playing some new comedy, and not a few were the merry words over him that passed among the jovial host of servants. But on one occasion she came as if by chance into the dining-room just as Porphyrius was about to devour a piece of roast goose.

He was sitting in a dirty dressing-gown, pale and unkempt, with many days' growth on his chin.

"But, lord, what is the matter?" cried the girl, shocked.

Porphyrius smiled in a semi-imbecile, semi-sarcastic manner, by way of reply, as if to say: "Try now whether you can pain me!"

"Lord, what is it? Speak! What has happened?" she repeated.

He stood up, cast a glance full of hate at her, and answered, in disjointed words:

"If you, depraved sweetheart—come once more—in my cabinet to me—I will kill you!"

* * * * *

August was already half over, and the days were beginning to shorten; outside continual rain streamed down, drenching the countryside. Everywhere, even in the servants' rooms, reigned undisturbed peace; they were sitting at their places in the hall, partly because of the bad weather, partly because they were anticipating that something ill was about to befall their master.

Eupraxia had quite come back to her senses, and no more thought of silken dresses and dear friends. Prochor twitted her with having poisoned Porphyrius, saying she would never escape punishment.

Meanwhile Porphyrius was sitting locked in his cabinet thinking. He sees himself as an invisible being, in spirit shape, inspecting his possessions under the guidance of ancient Ilia, who, under papa of blessed memory, Vladimir Mikhailovitch, served as village-mayor, but who now for long had rested in the churchyard.

"Old Ilia, faithful servant ! What sort of people exist nowadays ? They sing and live in pleasure, but to work they will scarcely descend." Thus speaks Porphyrius, very pleased that Ilia was risen from the dead.

"Fear nothing, and pray to God, we are visible to no one."

Over plains and ravines, through dales and meadows, they fly, and will not trust their eyes. Before them stands a mighty wood like a wall. It is a pine-wood.

"See, friend, it is a wood !" cries Porphyrius, ravished.

"But it has been consecrated," declared old Ilia, "by the dead uncle Michael Vassilieff, and we have surrounded it with holy images ! "

"How many acres may it count ? And how many trees stand to each acre ? "

"Who knows ? God alone has counted."

"I believe, surely, that there are from six to seven hundred an acre." He took a sheet of paper and reckoned it up : "Sixty-eight thousand two hundred and fifty trees. Now, if we sell the whole wood—do you think we can get ten roubles a tree ? "

Ilia shook his head.

"That's too little for such a wood ; from every

stem can be made two mill-wheel shafts. Here, a shaft costs ten roubles, but in Moscow it has quite another price. Reckon everything together—shaft, planks, branches—the tree comes out at twenty roubles."

Porphyrius reflected. Ilia was a reasonable and faithful man, and everything he set about God crowned with success. He began to make fresh calculations.

"See friend, this is what it comes out at!" said Porphyrius, showing Ilia a mammoth total, so colossal that even Ilia was astonished.

"That would be much too large," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

Porphyrius only laughed heartily.

"Strange man! This is arithmetic, and arithmetic cannot lie. Now we will leave Ushovshina for to-day, and go to the fox holes! They tell me that the peasants steal there. Garanka is custodian, and he is reliable. But even he may be mistaken."

They go invisibly, inaudibly through a birch-wood. In the middle, on the path, a peasant's wagon is lying on its side with a broken axle. The thieving peasant looks round. Does he hear anything? He selects a serviceable birch-tree and takes his axe in his hand. Porphyrius stands motionless. The birch trembles, sways and falls like a sheaf of corn to the earth. The peasant is about to hew from the stem what he wants. Porphyrius slips up to him and in a trice whips the axe from his hand.

"Ah!" is all the surprised thief can exclaim.

"Ah!" mocks Porphyrius. "Ah! and what fine birch has he felled for himself?"

"Forgiveness, lord!"

"I have forgiven everyone! A sinner before God, I dare not judge another. Take the axe which you have hewn out and deliver it on the estate, and

pay at the same time a penalty of one rouble. I will retain your axe during your absence."

Pleased that he was able to prove to Ilia how justified his suspicions were, Porphyrius turns to Garanka's cottage, and administers to the latter a personal reprimand. On his way back home he snatches three hens from the hands of different peasants. Having reached his cabinet once more there suddenly develops in his brain an altogether special system of estate administration. Everything growing, everything sown and unsown is converted to gold and pecuniary penalties.

Tremendous rows of figures cover his paper, at first single roubles, then in tens, and finally hundreds and thousands. Porphyrius becomes so fatigued and excited over his work that he perspires and has to rise from the table to lie down and rest on the divan. But his provoked force of imagination does not even now liberate him from its activity ; it merely introduces another, if lighter, theme.

"But still she was a prudent woman, was mamina Arina Pétrovna," he rambled ; "she understood how to ask and to flatter, and hence everyone served her willingly ; but yet she had many sins on her conscience ! Oh, yes, she, too, kept a tally."

And, as if her heart had felt that she must give an answer, Arina herself appeared from the grave.

"I don't know, dear son, for what offence I am blamed ?" she said in a dejected way. "It seems as if I—"

"Why did you not, for example, stop Aunt Barbara Mikhailovna at that time ?"

"How could I hinder her ? She was of age, and had the right to act independently."

"Oh, no. allow me ! What sort of a husband had she ? An old drunken good-for-nothing ! And they have had four children ; why, I ask you, have they begotten these children ?"

"But how strangely you speak, dear son ! As if I were the cause of it."

"More or less the cause ; you could have made your influence felt ! But you did the contrary. Goriuschkino would have been ours ! "

"To you shall Goriuschkino be given," says Arina, obviously perplexed at her son's impeachment.

"What should I do with Goriuschkino ? I no longer need anything ! But in truth, maminka, I should be glad if I could hold my tongue, but I must say a great sin lies on your soul, a very, very great one ! "

Arina Pétrovna did not answer, but spread her hands apart as if perplexed and full of doubt.

"Or I will adduce yet another example," continues Porphyrius, who relished the discussion with his mother. "Why did you buy a house in Moscow for brother Stépane ? "

"I had to, my son. I had to throw him something, as heir," said Arina in defence.

"But he took and squandered it ! And you must have known him only too well ; he was a toper, a demoralised man, and a dishonourable man ! Eh ? And to a man like that you even wanted to give the parental property of Vologodsk ! This estate, which is so finely rounded off ! No neighbours, no strange land in between, beautiful wood, a lake standing like an egg in the middle ! It is well that I have pitched on this subject ; I will tarry a while over it. Ah, maminka, maminka ! was that no sin on your part ? "

"But yet he was a son of mine—nevertheless, take it, too, my son ! "

"I know ! I understand quite well ! And yet it would not have been necessary ; he had no right to it ! The house has been exchanged for twelve thousand roubles. Where are these ? Much money has been lost ! "

"Come now, there is enough left ! Don't be angry, for Jesus' sake !"

"I am not angry, I am only judging according to justice. What's right remains right, and I can't tolerate lies. In truth was I born, in truth have I lived, and in truth will I die, too ! God loves truth, and commands us to love it. And it is the same with Pogorelka. How much did you spend on that building ?"

"But I myself lived in it——"

Porphyrius read on his mother's face the words : You insatiable bloodsucker ! But he acted as if he had not noticed it.

"We don't need much to live. But the cupboard with the holy images still stands in Pogorelka. To whom does it belong ? The pony, too ! and the tea chest ! People really do not see how a half-rouble here and a half-rouble there mount up. Let me demonstrate it by figures !"

He hurries to the table in order to prove with absolute clearness how much loss his dear maminka had involved him in. But, fortunately for Arina, his disturbed understanding could not tarry long with one and the same subject, and, all insensibly to Porphyrius, a fresh subject of his lust of gain enters into his thoughts and, as if by a spell, turns them into another direction.

The figure of Arina Pétrovna, which had just now stood so clear and living before his eyes, suddenly vanished in the background.

For long he occupied himself with calculations as to what his agricultural operations would bring in. He knows that the peasant lives in eternal want, and thus he seeks constantly to lend at an usurious rate of interest. Especially generous is the peasant with his work, which "costs him nothing," willingly, when in debt, turning his hand to anything as a sign of his love ! There are many necessitous

people in Russia. Ah, how many ! So many who cannot decide to-day what they may expect to-morrow. And here, around these despairing men, about this endless poverty, Porphyrius weaves his boundless cobweb.

It is April, and the peasant as usual has nothing to eat. "Have you eaten everything up, good friends ? Throughout the winter you have made holiday, and in the springtime you get wealthy," says Porphyrius to himself.

Porphyrius stands at the window and waits ; there in the distance, in his cart, is the peasant Phokas, coming over the bridge ; at the gate of Golovlevo he shakes the reins three times and, for want of a whip, hits his horse with his fist ; the creature can hardly lift its feet from the ground.

Phokas, having arrived at the servants' quarters, tethered his horse by the hedge, threw it a handful of hay, and then entered the girls' room to wait for Porphyrius, who generally received similar petitions in that place.

"Well, my good man, what fine thing do you want to tell me ?" begins Porphyrius.

"I have my brown horse there, lord——"

"Already at an end with your fodder ? How wicked ! If you drank less brandy, and worked and prayed a little more, perhaps the land would derive some benefit ! Then you would not find it necessary to borrow.

"You think : God is far, and therefore sees nothing ?" Porphyrius goes on moralising ; "but God is there, he is here. He is everywhere with us, while I speak to you He is present ! He sees everything, hears everything, and merely feigns not to observe. Instead of spending something from our poor means on a candle for God, we only need it to sit in the tavern. Yes, in the tavern. That's why God has given us no corn, my good man !

"God remembers those who have forgotten Him," continues Porphyrius, "and it is not permitted us to grumble over it. If we were always thinking of God, He would not forget us, and would grant us everything: corn, oats, and potatoes for the table! Also would He keep our animals in view—your horse, for example."

"You are quite right there, Porphyrius Vladimiritch."

"To love God is the first, and to honour old age second duty, for this latter is highly esteemed by the Tsar himself."

"It seems to us, Porphyrius——"

"To you 'seems,' but just think and reflect, it may be that you are muddle-headed. You are now very friendly; but, do you know, in a former year when I wanted reapers, and came to you peasants, saying, 'Help me, friends!' what answer you gave me? I could go and cut my corn myself! It is now no longer the time when one had to work for the lord; now we enjoy free will! Good, free will shall endure, but no support do I give."

Phokas scarce dared to move under the gaze of Porphyrius, and stood as if rooted.

"You are very proud, and therefore have no happiness. Look at me—it seems as if God had blessed me, but I—shall not be proud! How can I? What am I? A worm! But God has rewarded me for my modesty."

"I think, Porphyrius Vladimiritch, that formerly landowners were incomparably better off," said Phokas, playing the sycophant.

"Yes, that was a time! Everything was there, hay and potatoes. But why recall the old times? I am not resentful. I have long forgotten the history of the corn-cutting. Let me see, did you not say that you were in need of corn?"

"Certainly."

" You have come to buy some ? "

" How ? I should like to borrow ! "

" Ah, so ! Yes, corn is now very dear." Porphyrius deliberated for some minutes as if he did not really know how he would act. " I should like to help the man, and yet the dear corn ! "

" I have," he says at last, " none for sale, for I cannot suffer traffic in God's gifts. But I will lend with pleasure. I think thus : to-day I lend to you, to-morrow you me ! To-day I enjoy a superfluity, therefore take and borrow. You want a corn-measure—take it then ! But to-morrow may well find me knocking at your window : ' Phokas, lend me a measure of corn ! I have nothing to eat ! ' "

" Ah, what then ! You would come to me, lord, you ? "

" Probably I shall not, but, speaking hypothetically, are there not such ups and downs in life ? How much corn do you want ? "

" A tschet."

" I'll let you have six tschets measured out against the delivery by you in eight months' time of an additional two."

" Isn't that a little too much, lord ? " stammered Phokas reddening.

" Too much ? Then you must go elsewhere. That's how the matter stands, my friend."

" That may be, but wouldn't an aggregate measure suffice ? "

" On what must I live then ? I, too, have very many expenses. Bethink yourself of this : if I sold my corn to a merchant I should get the money counted out on the table. With gold I can buy bonds and enjoy the interest from them. For long I have entertained the idea of converting everything into money and going away altogether from you here."

"But you are living quite well with us, Porphyrius Vladimiritch."

"If I had my former strength I could certainly remain and be lord. But no, it is time to rest."

Phokas could bluster as he chose, but the business was settled as Porphyrius desired. But he had not yet finished.

"Well, then, I lend you the corn," he said ; "but as I take no interest, you must of course mow an acre of that meadow for me. You shall even have a rouble for doing it——"

Porphyrius rose to indicate that the interview was at an end.

Phokas disappears. Porphyrius takes a fresh sheet of paper and is immersed in calculations ; gradually a perfect orgy of figures appears ; the world becomes veiled before his eyes with a cloud, and in feverish haste he looks at his calculations and his bonds, and the figures grow, grow, grow——

CHAPTER VII.

SETTLEMENT.

DECEMBER was half over and the whole country lay still—fettered as it were by a limitless garment of snow. No trace of the road to the manor house of Golovlevo was visible.

It is the forenoon, and the clock is striking eleven. Porphyrius is standing at the window in his dressing-gown, staring expressionless in front of him. The garden, erstwhile swollen with fruit, and the village behind it, lie as if suffocated in the snow-drifts. In the yard all is deserted and still. There is not the slightest perceptible movement either in the servants' dwellings or in the cattle-stalls. The entire village seems buried in the sleep of death.

But on the hill by the carriage-way leading from the village of Naglovka a small black speck has become visible which gradually approaches and grows larger. Porphyrius looks and looks, and a mass of conjectures naturally throng his brain. It is probable he would long have remained floundering in this ignorance if the dark point had not at last turned down the road leading to the church; for now Porphyrius could see that it was a small, speedy two-horse kibitka. He drew his dressing-gown together as if he feared the traveller might see him. The vehicle meanwhile came on and finally stopped before a side-door. From it jumped

a young womanly apparition, dressed not quite according to the season, in a paletot lined with wadding and trimmed with plush, evidently worn more for show than warmth. She seemed almost benumbed. As no one came forward to meet her, she ran to the maids' wing, and after a while knocking was heard at the door. Then she knocked at another door, and after that could be heard a general running about in the nearest quarters with much banging of doors.

Porphyrius stood at the door of his cabinet and listened. He had for so long seen no relative that fear seized him. A quarter of an hour elapsed, the running about and door-banging had not yet ceased, and no one had yet communicated with him. This excited his violent anger. It was clear the arrival was of the number of those who, in their quality of "true relatives," do not leave a moment's doubt as to their right to unlimited hospitality. Who could it be? He had had, of course, a son, Vladimir; a son, Peter; a mother, Arina Pétrovna, but that—ah! that was long, long ago. Could it be Nadka Galkina, the daughter of the dead Aunt Barbara, who had settled in Goriuschkino? No! She had tried once to penetrate the temple of the idol of Golovlevo, but had not succeeded. Who could it be?

While he thus reflected, Eupraxia came cautiously to the door, announcing:

"The lady of Pogorelka, Anna Semenovna, has arrived!"

It was indeed Anninka, but she had so altered that it was almost impossible to recognise her. This time there appeared in Golovlevo not the beautiful imperious young woman, bursting with the energy of youth, of fresh complexion, gray vivacious eyes, voluptuous bust, and heavy tresses piled on her head; not she who had arrived shortly after the

death of Arina Pétrovna ; but a feeble, unhealthy being, with slack breast, sunken cheeks, an unhealthy flushed face, and infirm movements—a bowed apparition with a bent back. Her glorious hair was ruined, and only her eyes, enhanced in size by reason of the thinness of her face, shone with a feverish glitter. Eupraxia looked at her for long before she recognised her.

“ Mistress, is it you ? ” she cried, clasping her hands together.

“ It is. But what do you want ? ”

Anninka smiled a little as if to say :

“ Thus it happens. You have out-ranked me now.”

“ Is uncle well ? ” she asked.

“ Ah, the uncle ! There is no doing anything with him. God is to be thanked that he is still alive. But we never see his face.”

“ What is the matter with him ? ”

“ Ah, it has all arisen from sheer tedium.”

“ Has he left off doling out his beans himself ? ”

“ He is silent now, lady. We occasionally hear him talking to himself in his cabinet, and laughing, but he is silent the moment he comes out. Are you quite well, lady ? ”

Anninka only made a motion with her hand by way of answer.

“ Is your sister well ? ”

“ For a whole month she has lain in her grave at Kretshetov, in the highway.”

“ Good God ! In the highway ? ”

“ You know how suicides are buried ? ”

“ Lord God ! How came she, a noble lady, to take her life ? ”

“ Once we were ladies, but then she took poison—that’s all. I was afraid. I wanted to go on living, and have come to you ! Not for long, have no fear. I, too, will die ! ”

Eupraxia stared at the speaker as if she were incapable of comprehending her meaning.

"Well, why do you look at me like that? I look alright? However, we'll talk later about it. Now let us pay the coachman and tell uncle."

She took two yellow paper notes from her pocket.

"This is my entire property! It is my own and well-earned. I was frozen to death coming, Eupraxia. My one thought was to get to Golovlevo, to die in warmth. I must have some brandy. Is there any handy?"

She declined tea, which, in the meantime, had been prepared in the dining-room. Porphyrius appeared. Anninka for her part greeted him in confusion, so greatly was he sunken and dried up. He came in strange fashion to meet Anninka, not as if he would have shown coldness, but with the expression of one who really had nothing to do with her. He spoke little, and like an actor speaking lines from an old long-forgotten part. He was completely distract, as if rather vexed at being taken away from business to attend to trifles.

"You have arrived then! What would you like? Tea? Coffee? Order what you want."

"Uncle, I come to you," she cried, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Well, there are plenty of rooms. Live here!"

"I am ill, uncle, very, very ill."

"Well, you must pray to God! I do when I'm ill."

"I have come to you to die, uncle."

Porphyrius cast a searching glance at her, and a scarcely perceptible smile wrinkled his lips.

"Have you finished your acting?" he whispered, half audibly and almost to himself.

"Yes, I have finished my acting. Lubinka has, too. She is dead, and I, I am still here and alive."

At the news of Lubinka's death, Porphyrius crossed himself and murmured a prayer; but Anninka sat at the table. Resting her elbows on the table, she looked across at the church and began to weep bitterly.

"Weeping and despair are a sin," said Porphyrius in a didactic manner. "Don't weep, but compose yourself and have faith—that is the part of a Christian."

But Anninka sank back in her chair and letting her hands fall inertly down, she repeated:

"Ah! I don't know. I don't know. I don't know."

"If you are killing yourself for the sake of your sister, that also is a sin," continued Porphyrius, "for if it pleases God to take—"

"Ah, no, no. Are you well, uncle? Tell me!" Anninka embraced him again.

"I am well, yes, well; but speak, do you want anything? Dinner, tea, or coffee?"

Anninka suddenly recalled how, at her first visit, her uncle had asked: "Would you like roast veal? Potatoes?" and she understood that for her there was no consolation to be found here.

"Will you go to Pogorelka?" asked her uncle.

"No, I should like to remain here; you don't object?"

"Christ be with you! Stay. If I asked about Pogorelka, it was merely because on the occasion of a visit there orders have to be given about a conveyance."

"Ah, no! later, later."

"It's all the same to me if you travel later, and live with me till then. You can assist in the house. I am quite alone. That lady there—" he indicated with a look full of hate, Eupraxia, who was handing out tea, "keeps to the servants' quarters, and at times is not within call, and the whole house stands

desolate. But pardon—has Lubinka been long dead?"

"Since a month, uncle."

"We will early to-morrow have a mass read. But first drink a little tea, and, if you are hungry from the journey, get something to eat."

Thus passed the first kinsmen's meeting, or rather re-union, and with its ending Anninka entered on a new life in that same deserted Golovlevo whence twice already in her short life she had been at her wits' ends to flee.

* * * * *

Anninka had, at the time she left Golovlevo, after Arina's death, gone straight to Moscow, and made every effort with her sister to get accepted on the Imperial stage. With this end in view she had turned to "Mama," the directress of the institute in which she had been brought up, and to several female friends of hers in the institute. But everywhere she met with much ceremoniousness, and "Mama's" friendly tone and expression altered when she heard that Anninka was playing at the provincial theatre; while her friends, mostly married, looked at her in a way that gradually became a source of anxiety to her.

In a word, all her attempts to get a foothold in Moscow remained attempts. To tell the truth, too, she could not stand up to the requisite gratuities required for a success on the boards of the chief city. She and Lubinka belonged to the number of those not especially gifted actresses, who their whole lives through play one and the same rôle. One reason for not engaging them was that these pieces had been given everywhere, and, in the majority of performances, no striking success had been attained. In *The Beautiful Helen*, she completely hid her fair hair under a fiery red wig.

From *Helen* she passed to the *Duchess of Gerolstein*, an entirely worthless piece ; and finally she played the part of Clairette in *The Daughter of Rinok*, overdoing herself in the effort to electrify the public, and only succeeding in giving the provincial theatre-goers the impression that she was an almost unseemly joke-maker, rather than an actress who wanted to please. She, however, did possess the reputation of a capable actress, and her fine appearance proved a good provincial " draw." But that was all ; she had no distinctive physiognomy, and, moreover, the greater part of the theatre-goers in her sphere were people whose main object was to acquire free access to the green-room.

So from Moscow she had to return to the provinces. She received a letter from Lubinka informing her that her company, much to her joy, was going to the government town of Samovarov, where she had struck up an affair with an official, who was so taken with her that he was ready, according to her opinion, to steal government funds for her.

When she met her sister in Samovarov, she found the " friend " to be the official Gabriel Stefanitch Lulkin, a discharged staff officer of Hussars. His face was friendly, his manners decorous, and yet one had the conviction that he would not exactly take to his heels if you put him before a chest of government cash. Lubinka received her sister with open arms, and informed her that a room had been got ready for her.

Anninka became violently angry at this. She recalled involuntarily the pastor's warning words. A lively quarrel ensued, and Anninka broke off relations and went to the inn. She learned that her sister's place had been filled by a girl from Kasan, named Nalimova—an insignificant actress, but utterly unconstrained in her entrance on the boards.

When Anninka returned to the inn, after ravishing the audience of Samovarov in *Perigole*, she found awaiting her a packet containing a draft for a hundred roubles, with a brief message signed "Kukishev, fancy goods dealer." She flew into a rage and went to the landlord. The latter said that Kukishev always wished newcomers good luck, and that he never injured anyone. But Anninka only recovered her tranquillity when she had sent the money and note back.

Kukishev, however, displayed more obstinacy than the landlord had credited him with. He reckoned himself among the number of Lulkin's friends, and was friendly with Lubinka. He was a man of firm character, and, like Lulkin, was a member of the local governing authority, and, like Lulkin, he knew how to control himself to the point of apathy. With these various advantages he thought he might count on getting Lubinka's assistance.

The latter had entirely burnt her boats, and the rumours about her were very painful to Anninka. Reports reached Anninka of a certain orgy in which Lubinka sang as a half-clothed gipsy in the midst of a great number of "admirers."

But what particularly filled Anninka with pain was that Lubinka could sing the romance about a bearded lover exactly in the manner of a Muscovite gipsy! That Lubinka could sing gipsy songs in the manner of Matroscha—that was a lie! *She, Anninka, she can sing these songs—without a doubt they were her genre, her ressort;* and, suiting action to word, she seized the guitar, threw the striped band round her shoulders, and, sitting down with one foot crossed over the other began :

"I—e—I—ab."

And, really, she did sound like a genuine gipsy.

Lubinka lived in abundance, and Lulkin, in order not to disturb the picture of intoxicating bliss, proceeded to borrow from the public coffers. In spite of the rivers of champagne that every night drenched the floors of Lubinka's dwelling, the latter became ever more capricious and presumptuous. First it was dresses from Madame Minangois, of Moscow, and then brilliants from Fulda. Lubinka scorned the cost of it all. In short, they lived thoughtlessly from one delirious day to another ! But there was one disagreeable thing : she had to listen to a well-meant warning from the police superintendent. The latter was a man who, in spite of the fact that he was of the number of Lulkin's friends, liked at times to show his power. So Lubinka gave his servant brandy and light repasts, while for the superintendent she herself prepared Swedish punch, of which he was particularly fond.

Kukishev, at the sight of all this superabundance, was consumed with envy. At any price he wanted just such a visiting house and just such a "lady." His one and only wish was to spend one evening with Lubinka and the next with his own lady, and the person on whom depended the realisation of this wish was Anninka.

But Anninka did not surrender. Hitherto the blood in her had not spoken, although she had many admirers. There was a moment when she thought she might be able to love a certain tragedian, Miloslavski the Tenth, who on his side was consumed with love. But he was so bashful, and withal so drunk, that he could never utter his love, and could do nothing but roll his eyes and hiccup. Thus was this love affair stifled at birth.

So that in the course of the whole year she had held out in the defence of her virtue, animated as it were by the wish to show the pastor of Woplino

that one could be heroic even in the midst of actresses. Once she had carried out her resolve to complain about Kukishev to the district inspector, who praised her for her sentiments, and urged her to continue to hold them in the future.

At the same time, on the assumption that the whole thing might really be a flank attack on himself, he had given her to understand that of course he had no absolute conviction that he could be useful to her in the wished-for sense. Anninka reddened on hearing this, and took her departure.

Meanwhile Kukishev had so artfully manœuvred that he succeeded in interesting the public in his efforts. People believed that he was acting "straight," and that the "Sweetheart of Pogorrelka" (as she was dubbed) was God knows what sort of an affected person. A regular party was formed which made it its task to tame the refractory stranger. They then set about making it seem that the habitués were shunning her and establishing a clique in the neighbourhood with her colleague Nalimova. By this means, without showing open hostility, they received the maid so coldly when she "entered," that at last the producer decided to hand her part over to Nalimova. And the most remarkable thing about it all was that Lubinka was taking the most active part in this intrigue, Nalimova having become with her a regular favourite.

In the autumn Anninka found that the sole principal part left her was "Perigole." In addition to that, the entrepreneur told her that in view of the coldness of her public her salary would be cut down to seventy-five roubles a month with only one annual benefit. She grew anxious; with such a wage she would have to go into meaner lodgings. So she wrote to various other entrepreneurs to whom she was recommended, but only

got the answer that they had heard from reliable sources that her over-great sensitiveness made any hope of success for her illusory.

A week more and she would have to go to the tavern, like that person Horoshavina, who played in the *Parvenus*. Despair began to overcome her, the more so as every day an unseen hand tossed into her room a note : "Perigole, surrender ! Your Kukishev." There appeared by her quite unexpectedly, Lubinka.

"Tell me," cried her sister shortly, "by all the saints, for what prince you are keeping your virtue ?"

Anninka fell into confusion. She involuntarily asked herself what exactly this virtue was ? She could no longer find any satisfactory answer to the question.

"I have, in six months, saved thirty bank notes," continued Lubinka, "and Heaven knows how much in dress money !"

"Kukishev," she went on, "is a good man. He'll keep you like a little cake and give you money. Besides that, you can leave the theatre——"

"Never !" cried Anninka with violent emotion ; she still had thoughts of the "Holy art."

"Well, wait if you like. But pardon, my friends are waiting below for me. Kukishev is among them. Shall we go together ?"

Anninka held her tongue.

"Well, consider it if there is anything to consider. And when you have considered—then come. Adieu."

On September 17th, Lubinka's birthday, the Samovarov theatre bill announced "Special Performance." Anninka was again in the rôle of "Helen," and "for this time only." Lubinka, "the other girl of Pogorelka," was taking that of "Orestes."

The public were in ecstasies over the arrangements. Hardly had Anninka appeared from the wings than such a tempest of applause greeted her that, accustomed as she was to an ovation, she almost felt a sob tighten her throat. When, in the third act, in the scene of the nocturnal awakening, she rises half denuded, there breathed through the house in the truest sense of the word a sigh, and an utterly electrified spectator could not restrain himself from crying out to Menelaus, who was on the verge of entering, "No, miserable, away, away!" Anninka knew the public had pardoned her.

Afterwards, the entrepreneur, falling at her feet, said :

"Now, lady, you are all supreme! From to-day you are engaged at your old salary with a corresponding increase of benefits."

In Lubinka's abode there was gathered a thick swarm of men, and such clouds of tobacco-smoke floated in the air that one could hardly breathe. Kukishev, in white tie and gloves, never budged a step from Anninka, who did not reject his homage. She felt it alike ridiculous and flattering that she could, at such a light cost, command this big powerful man, who could bend and straighten out a horseshoe, to do just what she wanted. After supper universal conviviality and drunkenness prevailed. Only one of those present, the tragedian Miloslavski the Tenth, looked about him in a troubled manner, as, bowed over his champagne, he gulped down glass after glass. Anninka refrained from drinking for some time, but Kukishev was so pressing with his friendly "Anna Semenova, may I ask you?" Even if it cost her a hard struggle to look at his heavy face and listen to his unintellectual talk, Anninka could not refuse, for she hardly perceived how her head swam.

Then one fine day Kukishev, leaving the dear

birthday child, put Anninka in a carriage. The respectable citizens were coming from early mass ; they murmured as they cast looks at the pert, slender girl of Pogorelka.

" We are already coming from church, and they are only just finished with their wine-drinking—streams of it, too ! "

The whole winter passed in unheard-of carousal. Anninka had gone utterly astray, and when she did at times think of the virtue of which the pastor of Woplino had spoken, it was only to say to herself, " What a fool I was."

Kukishev, under the influence of a proud self-consciousness, did not stint the money. Stung by ambition and rivalry of Lulkin, he would order two dozen of champagne against Lulkin's one dozen, until Lubinka began to grow envious of her sister, especially as the latter had managed to save forty bank-notes besides receiving presents of jewellery.

" When it's all over, we'll go to Pogorelka. We shall have money, and will live there."

Lubinka replied cynically :

" Ah ! do you imagine this will ever cease, fool ? "

Unfortunately for Anninka, Kukishev was always getting some new " idea," which he at once began to follow up with his customary perseverance. It suddenly appeared to him that it would be the summit of happiness if his " lady " would " accompany " him—by which he meant drink brandy with her. Anninka resisted for a long time, telling him that Lulkin did not make Lubinka drink brandy.

" She would drink some for love of Lulkin," replied Kukishev. " But just think ; is the Lulkin ménage to be our pattern ? They are for themselves ; I am for you, for the beloved of Kukishev. Therefore we do as pleases us."

Thus did Kukishev attain the realisation of his "idea," and then began to find out a "new" one, "just to show those Lulkins something."

"Do you know," he said one day, "as soon as summer comes, we will travel in the country together with the Lulkins. I have a mill there; we'll take a bag with us" (he meant a basket of wine and lunch) "and bathe ourselves in mutual harmony."

"No, I will never go there!" answered Anninka, annoyed.

"Why not? First we will bathe. Pitch a camp, and then bathe again. Won't it be just great?"

It is not known whether this new "idea" of Kukishev ever came to be accomplished, but the whole year passed in this drunken carousal, and yet, during all that time, neither the magistrates of the town nor those of the country had the slightest suspicion of Messieurs Lulkin and Kukishev. Lulkin paid a visit to Moscow for the sake of appearances, and, on his return, stated he had been to sell a wood for felling timber. As for Kukishev, he, in order to divert attention from himself, spread the rumour that he had been concealing a consignment of points of lace in pencils so as to get them smuggled over the border.

In September of the following year the police inspector asked Kukishev for a thousand roubles, and Kukishev was unwise enough to decline. The former then began to whisper something to his colleague, the procurator, with the result that on the 17th September, when Kukishev was about to celebrate once more the birthday of Lubinka, a messenger came from the magistrates' court to tell him that he must appear at the court to make a deposition.

"Some one's found a debit, I suppose?" remarked

Kukishev with tolerable equanimity, and without further remarks followed the officer to the court, and from there to prison.

On the next day the district court assembled. A committee was selected, and the money chest sent for. The cash was reckoned again and again, but there remained the "debit" after every calculation.

Lulkin, pale and serious, was present at the examination. While all the members were occupied about the "debit," and each was speculating as to what kind of property Drygalovo (the name of one of Lulkin's imaginary woods and through which the loss had become discovered) might be, Lulkin stepped to the window and blew out his brains with a revolver.

Lulkin was pitied; he had at least left the world honourably. Of Kukishev people said: "He was born a counterjumper and as a counterjumper he will die!" As regards Anninka and Lubinka it was said: "They are the cause, it was for their sakes" it all happened, and "there was really nothing to prevent them being sent to prison to teach them to avoid such extravagances in the future."

They were not in fact imprisoned, but were put into such a state of fear that they found themselves in complete disorder. Some, well-meaningly, advised them to clear out with their valuables; they listened, but did not understand. Thus it came about that the advocate who, in the interest of the magistracy, appeared at the abode of the sisters with a court officer in connection with taking bail, took and sealed by protocol everything he could light upon, excepting only dresses and such gold and silver trinkets as from the inscriptions on them were clearly presents from a ravished public. Lubinka succeeded in concealing in her corsets a packet of paper-money which she had received the evening before. The packet contained a thousand

roubles—all the sisters would have to live on for an indefinite time.

In anticipation of the legal proceedings, they were kept in Samovarov for four months. When the proceedings began Anninka in particular was subjected to a painful examination. Kukishev was insolent to the point of exciting disgust ; there was absolutely nothing in what he said, but obviously he wanted to assume an air of importance before the ladies of Samovarov. Anninka fainted several times, but the state attorney, paying no heed, put question on question to her. At last the hearing came to an end, and judgment was pronounced. Extenuating circumstances were recognised in the record, by which Kukishev was sentenced to lifelong exile in Western Siberia in a place not very far distant.

After the trial the sisters obtained permission to leave the town. They were under contract with the entrepreneur of the Kretshetov theatre, who demanded their instant appearance there on pain of invalidating their agreement. Of their trinkets and papers, which had been sequestrated at the instance of the state attorney, they heard nothing further.

And this was the result of their departure from the path of virtue. Persecuted by universal contempt, they had given up all hope of any happiness in the future. Anninka, well versed in the school of Kukishev, took to brandy drinking.

Things meanwhile got worse. They had hardly alighted in Kretshetov when two gentlemen took them by the arm. Lubinka's was appropriated by gang-master Papkov, Anninka's by a merchant, Zabvenny. But, notwithstanding this joyful reception, the fleshpots of Egypt came no more, and, after three or four months, the men grew cold. It was the same with their luck on the boards. The

entrepreneur who had engaged them on the strength of the scandal, had miscalculated. When they appeared, a voice from the gallery cried : " Pfui ! They were under the magistrates !" The cry clung to them and cut off all further career on the stage.

By the end of the winter, after Zabvenny and Papkov had left them, the sisters had neither patron nor any other support. They derived a needy living from the theatre, but the days of " Perigole " were over. Lubinka still maintained a defiant demeanour, but Anninka, who was more nervous, felt broken ; she seemed to have forgotten the past, and did not trouble about the present. Moreover, she now began to cough suspiciously, and it was obvious some latent malady was threatening her.

The following summer was frightful. They were the prey of every passing gentleman in the inns. There was scandal upon scandal, brawl upon brawl. They almost reminded one of those poor dogs, who, unmindful of their weariness, covered with wounds and with staggering feet, nevertheless continue to seek out their favourite spot. It did not appear advisable to tolerate characters of such a stamp even in the theatre.

In this tragic year there was only one ray of sunshine in the life of Anninka. The tragedian Miloslavski sent a letter from Samovarov in which he offered her his hand and heart. Anninka read and wept. In the morning she wrote back, " What good ? Only to drink brandy together ? " The darkness became ever more oppressive, and the last blow, the saddest of all, was nigh fulfilment.

Lubinka was the first who came to her senses, or rather did not come to her senses, but instinctively felt that she had lived long enough.

Gain was not to be acquired, youth, beauty, and talents having all fled ! To the fact that she

possessed a refuge in Pogorelka she did not give a thought ; the place lay too remote, dark, and buried in oblivion. Besides, with what face should she appear there ? With a face which bore the impress of countless drunken kisses—the stigma of vulgarity.

Lubinka had much good sense, and it became clear to her that further life was worthless for her. Before her lay nothing but shame and beggary on the streets. Shame ? Yes, she was used to that—but begging ?—never ! Better end all at one stroke, for ever !

“ We must die ! ” she said one day, in her cold, deliberate tone—the same tone in which she had asked her sister two years ago for whom she might be guarding her virtue.

“ Why ? ” asked Anninka, frightened.

“ I say to you in all seriousness : we must die ! ” repeated Lubinka, “ don’t you understand me ? ”

“ Well, then, let us die ! ” acquiesced Anninka, unconscious of the mournful significance of such a resolve.

On the same day Lubinka broke off the heads of two sulphur matches and prepared two glasses of some infusion. The one she hastily drank herself, the other she handed to her sister ; but a sudden fear seized Anninka, and she would not drink.

“ Drink, fallen woman ! ” cried Lubinka to her. “ Sister, dearest, darling, drink ! ”

Anninka screamed with fear, and almost demented, flung herself on the deal boards of the room, instinctively clutching at her throat as if she were about to throttle herself.

“ Drink, drink, miserable——”

The theatrical career of the maids of Pogorelka was at an end ; on that same evening they took the body of Lubinka out to a field and buried it.

With her arrival in Golovlevo Anninka brought into the old still retreat of Porphyrius the atmosphere of the complete nomad. She stayed up late; undressed, unkempt, with heavy head, she sat about in corners, coughing—coughing with such violence that Porphyrius continually trembled with fright. Her room was always in disorder like her bed, and her toilet table accessories lay strewn about on chairs or on the floor.

Soon after the midday meal the early twilight of December entered the room; Anninka loved to follow the gradual wane of the winter day, and watch the house fill more and more with shadows until the whole lay in impenetrable darkness. Porphyrius was taking his nap. Eupraxia had crawled into bed, and Anninka was now quite alone. She walked up and down and sang half aloud to herself as if she wanted to tire herself out, though her main object was to drive her thoughts away. But in spite of all her efforts the memories would come. There was her dressing-room with its cheap carpet, the partition with the inevitable pier-glass, and the equally inevitable bouquet of Lieutenant Papkov the Second. And then the stage, with its much worn indecent decorations. She could imagine she was “on.” There is the auditorium; from the boards it looks to be in the best order, almost glittering—in reality it is poor, dark, and adorned with any old upholstery. And for the rest: officers, officers, officers, and always more officers! Then the inn, with its ill-smelling corridors, feebly lighted by smoking lamps. And the room where she changed for further distractions, the common hall, full of the smell of dinner, with its covered table in the centre, and in the evening, cutlets and peas, reek of tobacco, compliments, chatter, drunkenness—and again, always the officers, officers!

And there were the recollections of her success,

her conquests, her happiness ! And with them were connected another series in which the tavern played the chief part. Damp walls, loose deal floor-boards, and the glittering vermin peeping through the cracks in the side walls. Drunken, dissolute nights ; travelling landowners who hastily took green bank-notes from their pocket-books, "girl-sellers," who almost broke the actresses in with whips in their hands. And the end of it all now ?—Golovlevo.

Golovlevo spelt death, the malicious, haggard death, eternally taking a fresh victim . . . Although it seems as if she had in Kretshetov gone to the wall through her own fault, yet the true cause of the deepest wounds lay here, in Golovlevo. Death, exile, and corruption—all proceeded from here. Here for the first time the orphans' ears were assailed with the words, "You beggars, idlers, insatiable and superfluous girls !" Nothing was hidden from the gaze of that hardened old man ; not the tiniest mouthful, nor the broken doll ; not the torn dress, nor the broken-down shoe. Every trifling sin at once revenged with a reproach. And then, when they had attained the age of judging for themselves, they understood that they could escape—and they had fled ! No one restrained them from their flight, nor could anyone hold them back, for there was nowhere anything more frightful, more awful, than Golovlevo.

Nor could she charm away this picture. In vain she tried to conjure up the sight of angels with silver gleaming wings ; behind them always loomed the figures of the Kukishevs, Lulkins, Zabvennys, and Papkovs. God ! Is, then, all lost ? Can one no longer lie, cheat oneself—and stifle everything in an orgy of wine and lust ? This past must be slain, that it may not poison the blood and tear the heart to pieces.

It is no longer conceivable that any future were yet possible, that a door still existed through which escape offered itself; that anything at all could happen. Nothing more can happen! And what was most unendurable of all was this: That she was really already a dead woman; for did not her face bear witness to her life?

These questions made her groan. She walked and walked, and paced the room to stifle the vivid recollections. But ever again rose up the "Duchess of Gerolstein," the "Beautiful Helen"—nothing but shamelessness and nakedness. Was that all?

At seven o'clock the house began to stir again. Uncle and niece sat together at tea talking tediously about nothing. After that Porphyrius slipped away again to his cabinet, while Anninka went to Eupraxia's room to play cards.

At eleven, having satisfied herself that Porphyrius was asleep, Eupraxia put several grooved dishes and decanters of brandy on the table, and the two of them sang wanton and shameless songs to the twang of the guitar, and when the songs and libidinous conversation were over, Anninka drank. Having drunk "to Kukishev" in cold-blood, she gradually lapsed into a gloomier tone, and then began to groan and weep.

Eupraxia looked on her with compassion.

"When I see you like that, mistress, my heart aches."

"Drink with me, then!" retorted Anninka.

"No, I couldn't do that! On account of your uncle, I have been shut out from a holy life, and if now I—"

"Ah, do nothing, then. Listen, and I will now give you "The Moustaehe"!"

And again the guitar began its strumming to the echo of "I—eh, I—oh." It was only long after midnight that sleep rolled like a stone on Anninka,

hiding her past for a few hours and calming her sufferings.

One night, when the two were again revelling, there suddenly appeared in the doorway the lean, deathly-pale apparition of Porphyrius. His lips trembled, and by the flickering light of the candle his eyes looked like abysmal holes. For some moments he stood before the startled women ; then he turned slowly and went away again.

* * * * *

There are families on whom rests as it were a certain predestination. This is especially noticeable in the case of the small noble families which, without vocation, without any close connection with life in general and with no special legal title, have existed from the very beginning, enjoyed the advantages of the law of serfdom and, scattered about the Russian country, dragged on a lifeless existence. They have now become right-less, but still squat on their decayed farm premises. In the life of these poor families, success and unsuccess alike are meaningless ; they neither reflect nor think.

Occasionally such a family unexpectedly taps a stream of success ; for instance : Kornett and his wife, starving, yet happy in their rural solitude, rear a large family of lusty, clean, and spruce boys and girls. The boys go through their course of instruction with distinction, and even when at school strain after alliances and protection. Thanks to their quality of leaving no loophole behind them, they assure to themselves the possibility of drawing on the old pelt without scandal, or of exchanging it for a new one. They are really the effective force of the century : these people who begin in place-hunting and end in treachery. As for the girls—

they marry well to secure their own regeneration, and manage so tactfully that without much difficulty they secure the first places in so-called "society."

Thanks to this favourable combination of circumstances, those to whom luck has come produce a new and cleaner generation. And after these follow another new generation, and so on, until the family, in the natural course of things, can be numbered among those in whom is vested an inborn right to life-long enjoyment.

In contrast, however, with these lucky families there is a great host of families on whose heads from the cradle upwards their penates bestow nothing but a pressing fate. Like a parasite, this destiny sits on the family, bringing corruption and crime and gnawing care from all quarters; it creeps through the whole organism, steals into the marrow, and goes down from generation to generation. Drunkards, shallow seducers, thoughtless chatterboxes, show themselves in great profusion in these families. Just such a sad destiny oppressed the Gollovlevs. In the course of several generations three characteristic traits had revealed themselves in the history of this family—indolence, uselessness, and dipsomania.

The first two brought in their train vain garrulity, shallowness, and intellectual vacuity. In the eyes of Porphyrius Vladimiritch there almost gleamed the sacrificial fires of this Fate, but from them also spoke the tradition of his ancestors. They had all been empty-headed incapable drunkards, so that the family of Gollovlev would probably have gone completely to the wall but for the fact that, in the midst of this wilderness of drunken despair, there suddenly sprang up the glittering meteor, Arina Pétrovna. This woman, by her personal energy, put the wealth of the family on an undreamt-of pinnacle; but all her efforts were

in vain since she could not transmit any of her qualities to her children, nay, even she herself long before her death fell into the snares of idleness and intellectual sterility.

Hitherto Porphyrius had held out. It may be that he was mindful of the examples of dipso-maniacs he had lived to see, or that the continual drunkenness of his mind satisfied him. The voice of the people reproached him for being in reality a drunkard. Nay, he himself at times felt that in his being there was a blank place that his hollow delusions did much to supply, but yet not everything. There was wanting in him just that something, stupefying and pungent, that could completely rob him of the conception of life, and hurl him all at once into the void.

And the seductive moment offered itself of its own accord. Some time since the arrival of Anninka Porphyrius, locked up in his cabinet, heard the odd noise which came from the other end of the house. He pondered for long what it might be without understanding, and then, at last, he found out for himself.

Anninka expected a rebuke the next day, but no rebuke followed. When Porphyrius appeared at the midday meal he poured out two glasses of brandy instead of one only for himself, and, in silence, with an almost insane smile, handed one to Anninka. It was in a measure a silent invitation, which Anninka accepted.

“ You say that Lubinka is dead ? ”

“ She is dead, uncle.”

“ Now she is in heaven—we may not grumble, but will bear her in our memory. Eh ? ”

“ Yes we will, uncle.”

They drank another glass, and Porphyrius grew silent again. Obviously he could not completely shake himself free of the bonds of his estrangement

with mankind. Only after the meal when Anninka, in the fulfilment of her kinsman's duty, thanked him with a kiss on the cheek, he pinched her on the cheek and said in a friendly manner :

“ Ah, you little rogue ! ”

In the evening at tea, which lasted much longer than usual, Porphyrius looked for some time at Anninka with his enigmatic smile, and at last said :

“ Shall we have some confectionery brought on ? ”

“ As you will.”

From that time confectionery and brandy appeared every evening on the dining-room table. The window shutters were drawn to, the servants went to rest, and niece and uncle sat *tête-a-tête*. In the beginning Porphyrius could not keep pace with Anninka's drinking, but with a little practice he came to rival her. Their conversation was not at first very inviting, but, as their heads grew hotter, it became more lively, often degenerating into an out-and-out controversy, the subject of which was memories of the victims of Golovlevo.

The originator of these disputes was always Anninka. With merciless frankness she grubbed up the archives of the Golovlevo family, and was especially fond of striking at Porphyrius by pointing out that he himself next to his mother had played the principal part in the creation of these victims. Such cynical hate breathed through every one of her words that it was difficult to understand how in this exhausted half-extinct organism there still existed such a degree of vital force. These attacks pained Porphyrius frightfully ; he defended himself but feebly, though when Anninka, in her biting recriminations, went too far, he cried out and set to cursing her.

These scenes were repeated daily without change.

The drunken conversations lasted till long after midnight, and were it not for the fact that they were uttered in the senseless impotence of drunkenness, might well have had a frightful ending. But if brandy revealed the inexhaustible well-springs of pain in these shattered hearts, it likewise calmed them again. The farther the night advanced the more was the acrimoniousness relaxed, and the feebler became the boiling hate. In the end they no longer felt pain, and the whole of the present disappeared from their eyes, giving place to a shining desolation. Uncle and niece would then rise heavily from their places and betake themselves with tottering steps to bed.

Of course these nocturnal sessions could not long remain a secret. On the contrary, their character soon became so clear that it did not seem strange to anyone when one of the servants in mentioning them uttered the thought of the commission of some crime. Throughout its wide extent the house of Golovlevo was now becoming downright torpid. Even in the morning there was no appreciable movement. People would wake up late, and then would echo right up to midday the marrow-chilling cough of Anninka from one end of the house to the other, accompanied by a stream of curses. Porphyrius listened in terror to this frightful noise, and had a presentiment that some misfortune was impending which might well carry him off.

Out of every corner of the forsaken house the "victims" now appeared to be crawling. Wherever he went, wherever he turned, everywhere grey apparitions rushed. There stood Papinka Vladimir Mikhailovitch, in white coat, mocking him and reciting from Barkov; there his brother Stépane, and by his side the silent Paul; and Lubinka was there, too, and the last sprigs of the race of Gollov-

lev, Vladimir and Peter. And all were drunk, enfeebled, and dripping with blood. And towering over all these apparitions stood a living form, and that living form was no other than he, Porphyrius Vladimiritch Gollovlev, the last scion of his extinct race.

The continual revival of the recollection of these victims was bound soon to have its effect. The past now stood so sharply before his soul that the slightest memory of it caused him pain. The natural result of this was fear—and the awakening of conscience.

Such an awakening of returning conscience is, as a rule, wont to produce its full measure of torments. The conscience gives no rest and reveals no possibility of beginning a new life; it merely tortures ceaselessly and aimlessly. Man sees himself in a sack filled with stones, given over without mercy as a victim of despair—a despair that can afford him no means of consolation in its gnawing, fruitless pain.

Porphyrius, in the course of his life, had had no occasion for the thought that even for his existence the process of dying would one day approach. He had calmly lived on for himself, not in discontent, but in prayer, and had not been capable of thinking that the destruction of the family had originated from just such a state of mind as his. Hence he could not regard it as conceivable that he himself was the cause of the downfall.

But this frightful revelation of the truth by his conscience had come too late; he was old, misanthropic, with one foot in the grave, nor was there a single being in the world who had any pity for him.

Why is he alone? Why does he see around him not only indifference, but what is worse—hate? Why is it that everything appertaining to him has

gone under ? Here, in this Golovlevo, was once a human home—how has it come about that not a trace of it is left ? Of all the young nestlings only this one niece is existing, and she hates him. Even Eupraxia, if now become quiet, hates him deeply. She lives on at Golovlevo because she can every month send her father provisions thereby, but nevertheless she hates him. He has inflicted on her the most grievous sorrow, he took from her the light of her life, he robbed her of the child and flung it in a nameless grave. And whither had it all led ? Wherefore had he lied, gabbled, tormented, and hoarded ? Looked at from the merely material standpoint, from the standpoint of the successor to the property—who was now to enjoy the results of this life of his ? Who ?

Conscience had finished with sleeping, but there was nothing more to be done. Porphyrius groaned and fell into a fury, waiting with feverish agitation for the evening, not because he wanted to drink like a beast, but to drown his conscience.

He loathed the “degenerate girl” who hurled accusations at him with such cold audacity, and yet at the same time he felt himself again attracted to her, as if the two had not yet sufficiently spoken out to each other, and as if there were ever just one more drop of poison left which willy-nilly he must take.

Every evening he induced Anninka to relate the story of Lubinka’s death, and every evening the idea ripened in his brain of putting an end to his own existence. This thought, at first but momentary, ended by sinking deeper and deeper into him until at last it constituted the sole shining point in the darkness of the future.

Added to that, his physical condition was severely shattered. He coughed violently, and at times had paroxysms of asthma which, apart from the moral

torments, were sufficient in themselves to fill up the cup of life with bitterness.

All the external signs of the poisoning influences which had sent the Gollolevs to the wall, were observable on his countenance, and in his ears droned the sighs of his brother Paul as he lay in the entresol of Dubrovino. And then appeared this lean sunken breast which, as it seemed, was every moment ready to burst with its remarkable vital force. Every day Anninka experienced an increasing mass of physical qualms, yet held out and would not yield. It was as if the organism in its capacity for resistance wanted to take revenge for every past victim.

In a word, from whatever quarter his end might come, the life-account of Porphyrius was closed. A life of pangs is not necessary ; one must die then. The evil is that death does not come. There is something profane in this hesitancy of death, when called upon with all the strength of the soul it but cheats and provokes.

It was the close of March and Passion Week was approaching its end. However much Porphyrius had alienated himself from every early association, yet a leaning towards the sanctity of this day was still strong in him. His heart experienced no other desire than wordless calm. And with his striving for peace the evenings had lost their wild, drunken character, and now passed in quiet and moderation.

Porphyrius and Anninka were sitting together in the dining-room. In an hour the evening service, which he accompanied with the reading of the gospel, ended, and in the room was a strong odour of incense. It struck ten, the menials had retired, and deep stillness again ruled in the house. Anninka, leaning elbows on the table, was lost in thought ; Porphyrius sat opposite, taciturn and sad.

Upon Anninka the service always produced an overpowering impression. As a child she wept violently when the pastor prayed : “ And they wove a crown of thorns and set it upon his head.” In a clear treble she used to sing after the choir, “ Glory be to Thee, all-suffering Lord.” After the mass she would run in a state of intense agitation to the servants’ room and there, in the blackest darkness (Arina Pétrovna allowed no light in that room when there was nothing to be done in it), related to the servants all about the “ sufferings of our Lord ” ; the tears flowed down their cheeks and deep sighs were audible ; the poor creatures felt the Lord and Saviour in their hearts and believed that He had arisen, yea, in truth arisen ! Even Arina, generally so brusque, did not scold or reproach Anninka, but merely told her she ought not to excite herself. But Anninka could not rest even in bed, but reflected the whole night through, even narrating the story to herself aloud. Then came the years of instruction, and then those of itinerant playing. The first were hardly to be endured, and the latter had ended in torment. But even in the midst of all the frivolity of the variable theatre life Anninka had zealously kept the “ Holy days ” in her mind’s eye, and in her soul sought those voices of the past which had afforded her peace and rest in childhood. Now, after she had exhausted her whole life to the very dregs, and was cursing the past, when the future vouchsafed neither repentance nor pardon, when the well-springs of solace were dried up and with them those of her tears—the impression made upon her by the reading of the story of the path of affliction was deeply depressing.

Once in childhood she had experienced an inner light. Now—she experienced nothing, said nothing more ; it was night, eternal, immutable night—and nothing beyond. Anninka neither

sighed nor was she moved; she seemed to be thinking of something else and was sunk in deep reflection.

Porphyrius, too, had always held "Holy days" in the greatest regard, but he did so exclusively from the ceremonial standpoint. Only now, after Anninka had awakened in him the consciousness of death, did he for the first time understand that this narrative concerned an unending injustice crowned with Truth's bloody execution.

It may be asserted that it were too much to suppose that this discovery had called forth in his soul a hostility towards life, although it may have awakened in him a tumult almost bordering on despair. This tumult was all the more shattering the more it appeared to him that its source was his earlier life. Something monstrous, which hitherto had stood immovable, concealed by an impenetrable curtain, now seemed to move forward towards him, threatening every moment to overwhelm him. Had it revealed itself directly, things would have been for the best; but he lived, and the hidden thing was coming in upon him. So that to expect a ransom from the natural course of things was an expectation fraught with too great uncertainty; to secure liberation from this intolerable torment the victim would be obliged to obtain a ransom by his own exertions. And there is such a ransom! For months Porphyrius had been envisaging it.

"On Saturday we will take the Lord's Supper—we must also pray at dear maminka's grave!" passes suddenly through his head.

"Shall we go?" he turns to Anninka, telling her his proposal.

"If you like—we will travel there," says the latter.

"No, not *travel*, but—" began Porphyrius, but

suddenly restrained himself as if it had occurred to him that Anninka might throw some obstacle in his way.

"I must go to my late maminka, I have afflicted her, I——"

The thirst for "forgiveness" burnt more fiercely every minute in his heart. But that forgiveness was not to be in the manner in which man ordinarily forgives; he wanted to hurl himself on the grave, and grow stiff in the groaning pain of a death struggle.

"You said, too, that Lubinka died alone?" he asked suddenly; obviously he wanted to steel himself to his purpose.

At first Anninka did not hear the question; but he had turned to her, because for some moments he had observed that Anninka felt herself under the imperative necessity of returning to the death of Lubinka and of tormenting herself with its recollections.

"She said, then, 'Drink, miserable one'?" he asked, when she had repeated the narration of the whole story yet again.

"Yes!"

"And you remained here? You did not drink?"

"I still live."

He rose and walked several times up and down the room in visible agitation. Then he walked to Anninka and laid his hand on her head.

"You poor dear; my poor child!" he said gently.

At this touch she experienced a most unexpected feeling. At first she felt her senses almost dying away, then her face changed colour, and suddenly there burst forth from her a whole stream of convulsive tears.

"Uncle, are you well? Tell me, are you well?"

she almost shrieked. With breaking voice amid tears and sobs she was putting the same question to him which she had put when in the past she had come from a strange world to stay here in Golovlevo, to which question he had then given so unsatisfactory an answer.

"Are you well? Tell me! Oh, answer! Are you well?"

"Did you hear what we read to-day at evening mass?" he answered, when she had become somewhat calmer: "Ha, what sufferings they were! and yet in spite of them He forgave!"

Once more he began to walk round the room with great strides, in pain, but without feeling that his face was covered with drops of perspiration.

"He forgave all," he said half aloud and as if to himself, "not only those who gave Him gall to drink, but also those who later, now, and in the future, and in all eternity, will extend but gall to his lips. Frightful it is. Yes, frightful!" and suddenly coming to a stand before her, he continued:

"And you—have you forgiven?"

Instead of answering, she flew on him and strained him to herself in an ardent embrace.

"I must forgive," he added. "All! Also myself and all who are no longer! It is all over!" he cried, utterly lost, and turning in a circle and looking round—"Where are they all?"

Tired and exhausted, they betook themselves to their rooms. But Porphyrius found no sleep. He tossed from one side to the other and reflected on everything that was burdening his soul, and suddenly again there occurred to him the words that some hours ago had gone through his brain: "I must go to maminka's grave, and ask forgiveness." At this reflection there possessed him a frightful tormenting agitation that dominated his whole being.

At last, unable to endure any longer, he rose from his bed and put on his dressing-gown. Outside all was dark and not a sound was audible. Porphyrius walked for some time up and down his room, and then came to a stand before the illuminated image of the Saviour standing there with its crown of thorns, and for long he gazed at it. At length his mind was made up. It is hard to say he could have been conscious of what he was doing, but after the expiration of a few minutes he was stealing noiselessly through the ante-room and soon rattling at a door which divided the house from the outer-court. In the open the wind was blowing and the soaking snowdrifts of the bleak March night were buffeting each other, and covering the eyes with melting flakes. But Porphyrius went along on his way, through the snow-water puddles, oblivious of wind and weather, and all unconsciously hugging the lapets of his gown as he went.

Next day, early in the morning, there came riding at a gallop from the village by the churchyard where lay buried Arina Pétrovna, a rider with the news that a few paces off the path the frozen body of the owner of Golovlevo had been discovered. They hurried to Anninka, but she was lying unconscious in bed with all the symptoms of a violent fever. A second messenger was then dispatched, and that too, to Goriuschkino, to "sister" Nadeshda Ivanovna Galkina. The daughter of Aunt Barbara Mikhailovna had since the past autumn been attentively following every event at Golovlevo.

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